

WHAT I SAW
IN HUNGARY

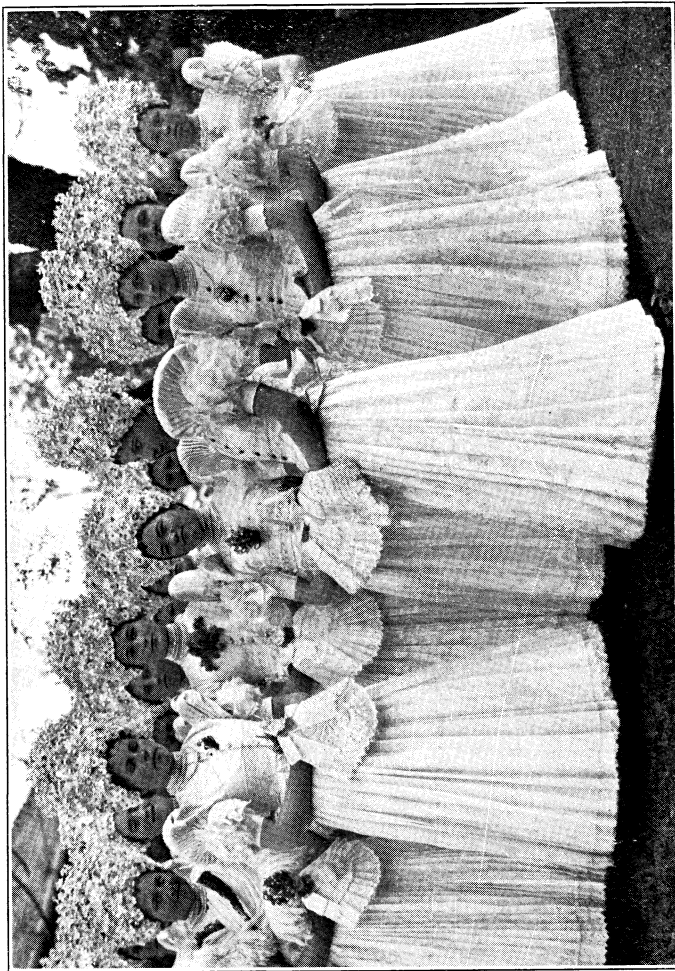


Photo by Ibsse Tourist Agency

CHILDREN OF MARY AT MEZŐKÖVESD

WHAT I SAW IN HUNGARY

by

CHARLES CUNNINGHAM

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To
MY MOTHER

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the time which has elapsed between the completion of this manuscript and its publication, there has been a change of leadership in Hungary. Count Bethlen has resigned and has been succeeded by Count Karolyi as Prime Minister. Very substantially, though, the policy of the new government is the same as that of its predecessor. Its most entire energies are being directed towards the maintaining of the full Hungarian national life in the present exceedingly difficult times. That the present government (and all subsequent governments) may succeed in this task, I most earnestly hope and pray. For not only have I a deep affection for Hungary, but as well I feel most strongly that the welfare of the whole of Europe is bound up in the closest connection with the welfare of this one country in Europe.

CHARLES CUNNINGHAM.

Rye, Sussex.

October 4, 1931.

THANKS

Of the many friends who have been kind in helping me with the getting together of this book, I wish particularly to thank His Lordship, Count John Mikes, Bishop of Szombathely; and János Almasyi, of Bernstein in Burgenland.

The illustrations in this book are from photographs supplied by courtesy of the Ibusz tourist agency, Budapest.

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WHAT I SAW IN HUNGARY

CHAPTER I

ON GETTING THERE

BEFORE starting for a place it is always as well to know just where it is located. For this reason I would advise anyone making for Hungary to look at a map and see *where* they are aiming for. One of the great grievances of the Hungarians is that the average foreigner coming into the country has not the remotest idea whether Budapest or Bucharest is the capital. I did not believe this when I first heard it, but, after receiving a number of letters addressed to Budapest, Roumania, and Bucharest, Hungary, not to mention one jewel which bore the inscription:

Hotel Ritz,
Budapest (or Bucharest?),
Central Europe,

I decided that there might be something in my friends' complaints.

So I would emphasize that Budapest is the

capital of Hungary, and that any of the international routes I shall mention will take you there.

The first time I went out to Hungary I travelled by the Orient express, *via* Strasbourg, Munich, Salzburg, and Vienna. It is an exceedingly comfortable train, providing as it does shower-baths, single-berth coupés, latest type *wagons-lits*, immunity from having your baggage inspected at the frontiers *en route*, and a bewildering number of servants in very smart liveries. But you have to pay a great deal extra for these luxuries; more, I think, than the luxuries are worth. Moreover, personally I greatly prefer having someone in the coupé with me to travelling in solitary and boring state. Nor does it greatly upset me to go for one or two days without a bath. Altogether my advice is: leave the *luxe* trains for the languid (or very wealthy), for it is much more amusing travelling ordinary.

If, however, money is no object and time is, and you want to travel Orient, then bear in mind that this train leaves London on three days of the week only—Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Another expensive way of travelling to Hungary, and this time worth it if you have the money to spare, is to go from London to Marseilles and there take one of the Adria Line steamers to Fiume, whence there is a through train to Budapest. This is a wonderfully good route. You travel *via* Marseilles, Malta, and the Italian coast, and you have the opportunity of seeing the port on the Adriatic where the Serbs and the Italians are, so to say, joint half-owners. Fiume is an excellent example

of the futility not so much of wars as of the divisions of the spoil which follow in their wake. Before the War, Fiume was a Hungarian seaport, and a remarkably well-conducted one at that. In the old days, ships berthed at the quays, and the cranes rattled and swung wide their arms in cheerful *abandon* as they raised cargo up from, or lowered freight down into, the depths of steamers' holds. To-day there is still powerful machinery on the quays of this port, but it is no longer in use, is depressingly silent. Now there is little activity except that of the weeds and rust, which daily grow thicker, and of the rather ludicrous Serbian and Italian sentries who guard, with comic opera ferocity, their respective frontiers in this shadow of a fine port.

Perhaps, though, I am wrong, and the vigilance of the sentries is not comic. It is possible that they really have been warned by their different authorities that they must be eternally on the *qui vive*! There is a rumour in Hungary, which you can hear discussed with the most amazing lucidity in coffee-house or castle, that Italy wants all the Adriatic Sea coast before she will feel really safe; and that rather naturally the Serbs do not wish to give up their share of the thing; and that when two countries want the same thing sufficiently badly, then a war is the only way of deciding who is to get it.

Mr. G. A. Birmingham suggests, in his excellent book, *A Wayfarer in Hungary*, that everyone ought to come into Hungary by way either of

Constantinople or Belgrade, the idea being that they provide such a contrast to the ordered efficiency of Hungary. I do not know either of the places mentioned by Mr. Birmingham, but I imagine that Roumania would make a good substitute for them. In Roumania one obtains such really amazing treatment at the hands of the authorities that, even if one has a preconceived prejudice against the Hungarians, one will weep tears of sheer relief on arriving at their frontier.

In Hungary you are at least allowed to break railway by-laws in a civilized manner. Such trifling irregularities as putting your feet up on the seat opposite, or travelling too far on the ticket you have taken, are quite rightly looked upon as being the natural eccentricities of a foreigner. In the case of feet and seats, you smile sweetly at the guard and murmur "*Angol*", meaning Englishman: he is charmed; he salutes and passes on. In the case of excess fare, you pay the amount and are similarly saluted.

In Roumania it is quite different. Once, when from sheer desperation at the slowness of the train, I placed my feet on the seat opposite to that on which I was sitting, a guard came along and wished to fine me 700 lei. Now 700 lei is a lot of money, nearly a pound, and I objected. The result was that I had to fill in a form saying when and where I was born, as also my father and mother, what I lived on (an appallingly difficult question to answer), and had I ever been in prison, and if so where? I filled in the thing and gave my address, and nothing more

was heard of the matter. But it was all very irritating and stupid.

On another occasion I forgot to get out at my station—an excusable omission, since the place was utterly unlighted—and went on to the next stop, a distance of seven kilometres. When I told the guard what had happened and offered the extra money he would not take it, but wished to fine me 2,000 lei. We had the same exchange of birthplaces and residences and so on, and eventually I was allowed to depart with the assurance that a summons would reach me in due course. That summons has not reached me, nor will it ever; but that does not alter the fact that it is objectionable to be treated in such a childish manner. The explanation, I have been told, lies in the fact that a Roumanian guard is entitled to take for himself half of whatever he may make in fines!

East of Hungary, the trains are incredibly slow and dirty and are inclined to be unsanitary; also, the stations are masterpieces of untidiness and inefficiency . . . Yes, go through Turkey, or Jugoslavia, or Roumania *en route* for Hungary, if you can manage it, and, if you cannot, be thankful!

But I shall assume that you cannot manage such a journey, and that you are anxious to hear about the cheap route *via* Ostend. So, *revenons à nos chemins de fer Européens*.

The cheap train from Ostend to Budapest is not an international “through” express, but attached to it are a number of coaches which go direct to the Hungarian capital, being transferred and coupled

up with new trains at the various frontier stations *en route*. These coaches comprise all three classes, as well as *wagons-lits*, and the cost between London and Budapest for a second-class sleeping-car berth is a fraction more than £10. From London to Vienna costs about one pound less. Registration of heavy luggage on all trains is terribly expensive, so that it is worth while to bear in mind the old advice: travel light. This train leaves London at half-past ten in the morning, and, travelling *via* Ostend, Brussels, Cologne, Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Passau, and Vienna, you are at Budapest two days later at six-thirty a.m.

This is a peculiarly dreadful hour to arrive anywhere, let alone a station where you may not be able to speak the language (German or Magyar) of the porters, and the intelligent traveller will take a ticket only so far as Vienna, disembarking there and making his own way into Hungary.

Vienna to-day, though still amazingly lovely, is a poor city; its poverty puts the voyager in the right frame of mind to go on to a country which has suffered even worse from the War than has Austria. As well, the atmosphere of Vienna, an atmosphere of we-are-stricken-and-it-is-all-the-fault-of-that-awful-War, will cause a visitor to Hungary to realize that there is something fine, vital, in the attitude which the Magyar has adopted towards the fate that has overtaken his land. Austria in these days gives the impression of acceptance. Hungary shouts (even though it may be a trifle shattering to our ears to listen to it):

"Nem! Nem! Soha! No! No! Never! We will not put up with it!"

One of the reasons for leaving the train at Vienna is that you can continue your journey to Budapest by the steamers of the Hungarian Steam Navigation Company. Many people maintain that the most satisfactory way of entering Hungary is to sail down the Danube from Vienna to Budapest. But with them I do not entirely agree. If you wish merely to see Budapest, then by all means take the river route. But I should advise anyone intending to go right through Hungary to cross the frontier at Sopron on the Vienna-Graz line, and to make his temporary headquarters in the cathedral town of Szombathely, of which I have written later on. Although I have planned this book—insofar as one can plan a necessarily rambling book—on the assumption of a traveller selecting the latter of these two methods of entering Hungary, I want here to give a brief account of the journey down the Danube.

Two hours after leaving the Austrian capital, at Hainburg, the steamer passes the former "Gateway of Hungary" which, since the dismemberment of the country by the Treaty of Trianon, is the Gateway of Hungary no more. Here there are two objects of outstanding interest: a ruined castle, symbol of the loyalty of the Magyars to the Habsburg Monarchy; and the Millennium Monument, which commemorates Hungary's thousand years as a nation. The castle, standing on a towering rock that has ceased to be Hungarian territory, was

destroyed by the French after the Hungarians had refused Napoleon's suggestion that they should disown Francis of Austria and elect a ruler of their own. The Millennium Monument, which stands beside the ruin, was built at a time when Hungary was at the height of an unique period of prosperity. It is a striking piece of work, but, looking at it, one cannot help feeling sad. The Magyars had been through so much before attaining to their nineteenth century prosperity. They had struggled and fought for wealth, culture, and recognition by the rest of Europe. This monument had been one of their grand gestures. Now it has ceased to be a triumphant memorial, has become a witness to the awful mutilation of the country it once glorified.

Half an hour's steam from the "Gateway" is Bratislava, where you have a good example of the sort of thing with which the Hungarians have had to contend for a long time. When the first Habsburgs were crowned there, this town was called Pressburg. Then, on April 11, 1848, King Ferdinand V had read before him at Pressburg the acts which turned Hungary from a dependent Austrian province into an independent, constitutional, self-governing state. Budapest went mad on that occasion. Bitter enemies embraced in the streets. The people shouted for joy. Petöfi's famous question—"Shall we be slaves or free?"—was answered. "No!" the majority cried. "*Nem! Nem! Soha! No! No! Never! We shall not be slaves!*" The name of Pressburg was changed

to the Hungarian Pozsóny. . . . By the Treaty of Trianon, Pozsóny was handed over to Czechoslovakia, which state promptly rechristened it Bratislava.

Undoubtedly the Hungarians suffered many a snub and many a cruelty under the Austrian rule, but those snubs and cruelties produced a reaction which was as nothing compared with the feelings that the nation now has for the Czechs. Which is one of the great characteristics of the Magyars. They know how to love, and as well they have the virility to be grand haters. A nation which can hate with the conviction that can the Hungarian must have a tremendous amount of enthusiasm; and enthusiasm is the quality which keeps alive peoples and places.

“No! No! Never! We will not put up with it!” You can see that determination almost anywhere that you care to look in Budapest to-day. On the doors of houses and on the boards of trams it is written; it is everywhere in the speech of the people.

The laws of 1848 which were enacted at Pressburg were a gigantic (though temporary) victory for the majority of Hungarians; but the epic event in connection with the place is the oath of allegiance to Maria Theresa which the nobility of Hungary swore in 1741, at a time when the young Queen (she was twenty-three) was at the height of her misfortunes. With Europe in arms against her, and the Viennese openly disloyal, Maria had retired in desperation to Pressburg. There, with her infant son,

she spent the summer; and there, in September, the young Queen made her appeal to the chivalry of the Magyars. The nobles did not stop to think of past indignities suffered at the hands of Austria, nor did they take counsel among themselves as to the advisability or otherwise of fighting the whole of Europe. Their Queen—a young woman, a defenceless and beautiful woman—had asked for their help: she should have it. They answered her with a mighty shout:

“Vitam et sanguinem! moriamur pro rege nostro Maria Theresia.”

That was an exceedingly *beau geste* of the Hungarian nation, but I admire just as greatly the genius of the Queen in provoking it.

When she was secure on the throne again, Maria showed her gratitude by giving to Hungary the port of Fiume and by restoring throughout the land, insofar as she was able, the buildings which had been devastated during the Turkish occupation.

Between Bratislava and Komárom there is little to be seen save the river. Since summer is the best season to visit Hungary, and since summer there is amazingly hot, there are only two things to be done during the hours taken by the steamer in paddling through the stretch of barren water separating those two ports. Either you can go to sleep, or (remembering to keep in the shade of an awning) you can watch the water. You will do whichever you are best at. If it be the former, I can recommend the deck-chairs, which are of the long variety, with excellent footrests. If you want to watch, the

Danube hereabout is fascinating in a heavy way.

Having memories of Strauss's "Blue Danube", you will probably be disappointed. For the Danube is so seldom as to be almost never blue. I have watched it in various countries from such divers vantage points as boats, embankments, trains, and back gardens. In my enthusiasm, I have even bathed in it! It has been pale jade-green, Thames-brown, black, yellow—never blue. But always wonderful. Here, between Bratislava and Komárom, it is fascinating.

At this stage the river flows very fast, smooth, and broad, strangely sinister. The country stretching away back to the horizon from either bank is table-flat, cut and cut again, intersected by innumerable channels and rivulets which radiate from the broad, hurrying, determined main river on which your boat is moving. The effect of the flat, motionless land stretching away from the river, untenanted it would seem by a single soul, is strange, reminiscent in parts of Suez, where also it can be hot and where mirages are a commonplace. Suez reminds me of India, where, despite a gigantic and tangled thickness, vegetation can be unreal, lifeless. You get the same effect here, a sense of the end, and of world without end, and of a lack of healing water which this great river cannot supply. . . .

Even in an endless world, time passes. It passes too on the Danube. You come to Komárom.

Before the War Komárom was in Hungary: now it belongs to the Czechs. Jókai, one of Hungary's

major novelists, was born there, and for that reason alone the loss of Komárom was a bitter one. Although Jókai was not a Hungarian Shakespeare, he was a fine writer, who came nearer to having a European reputation than perhaps any other Hungarian novelist. But Komárom's greatest claim on the affections of patriotic Magyars lies in the history of its fortress, parts of which date from the fifteenth century. On one of the walls of the inner fortress there is this fine inscription: "*Nec arte nec Marte*: Neither by force nor treachery can this place be taken." Twice, during the period of their occupation of Hungary, the Turks tried to capture the fortress. On neither occasion did they succeed.

Above all else, your modern Hungarian thinks of Komárom in connection with the struggle against the Austrian Imperialists.

In January, 1849, so soon after the triumph of Pozsóny, Windischgrätz, after quelling the revolution in Vienna, had taken possession of Buda, thus necessitating the removal of the Government to Debreczen. Towards the end of the month, however, the pendulum swung over in favour of the Hungarians. By sheer genius, the Hungarian generals, Görgey and Klapka, had transformed an army of raw recruits into a disciplined force of troops, and a series of brilliant victories over the invading Austrians was the sequel. By these victories Hungary proved to the rest of Europe that she was well able to defend her constitution and national existence. But unfortunately her diplo-



Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

ESTERGOM: THE CATHEDRAL

macy was not so good. In the moment of victory, instead of making an advantageous peace with Austria—as had been done before by Bocskay and Bethlen—the country determined to continue the war and punish the overbearing dynasty. This was fatal, for the Emperor Francis Joseph, making an alliance with the Czar, soon had a reinforcement of quarter of a million Russians at his back. The Hungarian army was unable to withstand this fresh onslaught, and, on August 13, 1849, Görgey, the Commander-in-Chief, was compelled to surrender.

But above the fortress of Komárom, the largest in the country, the Hungarian flag continued to fly. Already the fortress had been besieged by Windischgrätz and relieved by Görgey, and now, besieged again, it was held by Klapka for six weeks in the face of overwhelming odds. Not until it was seen that the national cause was utterly lost did the heroic general and his garrison submit. And when eventually Klapka decided to haul down his flag, he did so on the most honourable terms.

After Komárom come Esztergom and Visegrád. The boat may or may not stop at these places; and if it does, it will not be for long enough to enable you to see anything of them. Since Esztergom and Visegrád are, historically, of the first import, and because they happen to be rather lovely in themselves, both are well worth visiting. I have written of these two places on the right bank of the Danube in another chapter, telling what I know of them and showing how much more satisfactory it is to revisit

them from Budapest, instead of merely glancing at them in passing.

That, then, is the way down the Danube from Vienna to Budapest. If you wish to go that way, you most certainly will. But do not follow the example of some American friends of mine, who, determined to see everything, bought a collapsible canvas canoe in Vienna and paddled downstream into Hungary. Those unfortunate people had their boat removed (I will not say stolen) once a day on an average, and the police in Austria and Hungary were able to come to the most friendly relations mutually cursing them. Do not, I repeat, however great your zeal and your powers of endurance, embark in a canoe to sail down the Danube. That is an uncomfortable way of travelling, and totally unnecessary, considering the excellence of the river boats!

I have already suggested that anyone intending to go right through Hungary would be well advised to make Szombathely, in the west, his first port of call. Let me now give my reasons for such a move. They are very simple. Firstly, Szombathely is a most attractive town (to which, for some inexplicable reason, practically no publicity is given in the official guide books and lists of excursions from Budapest), and should certainly be seen. And, secondly, this town is the centre of a large district which is typically Hungarian and exceedingly beautiful. Moreover, by starting from Szombathely, it is possible to work through western Hungary towards Budapest without the annoyance of retrac-

ing one's footsteps that would be necessary if one set out from the capital to see this district.

Anyone going direct from Vienna to Szombathely has a very easy journey ahead of them. The distance between the two points is not more than one hundred and fifty kilometres, a matter of three hours by fast train.

CHAPTER II

SZOMBATHELY

SZOMBATHELY is a town with a history. A few years before Christ, the Romans came there, and in the year A.D. 34 the Emperor Claudius founded the city which for a long time was called Sabaria Claudius. The place grew and was soon the capital of the Roman colony of Pannonia. In the third century, the Emperor Severus was proclaimed Emperor of Rome at Sabaria. Palaces, fortresses, walls, houses and temples in stone grew thick over the surrounding country; and when, in A.D. 315, Saint Martin of Tours visited the city, it was a place of high rank in the Roman Empire.

Attila and the first of the Hun hordes invaded this part of Europe in the fifth century. They surged against the stone city of Sabaria, cast out the Romans and so completely demolished the place that Charlemagne, passing with his soldiers through the ruins in the ninth century, gave to them the name of *Stein am anger*, meaning stone in the desert, a name still used by the Germans.

The founder of the modern town of Szombathely was John Szily, to whom the Bishopric was given after its foundation by Maria Theresa in 1777. Szily reigned for twenty-two years and was a good bishop and a great man. It was he who built the magnifi-

cent palace and the fine cathedral; he, too, who was responsible for the beautiful smaller dwellings of the canons which stand opposite the cathedral. I shall describe the buildings later on. Here it is most interesting to reflect that when the cathedral was completed the inhabitants of Szombathely as it was then remarked to the Bishop:

“But, your Lordship, we are only three thousand strong in Szombathely, and if every one of us turned out for Mass we should not half-fill the cathedral.”

Szily quite agreed. “But,” he added, “I imagine, you know, that Szombathely will grow.”

He was right. It has grown. To-day the townlet of three thousand souls is the fifth town in Hungary, having a population of more than fifty thousand, much too many to fit into the largest cathedral in the world. I like the idea of Szily. There was something peculiarly good in building what is probably the most perfect classic-baroque cathedral and palace in all Hungary, and doing it in a village no larger than the average Mould-on-the-Marsh that one finds in the south of England. The bishop, though, should have lived in the days of the Renaissance, for then he could have revived the glories of ancient Sabaria, which same glories must have been considerable.

When you arrive in present-day Szombathely there is nothing apparent that even remotely suggests a Roman town. The station is large, one of those vague, French-looking affairs with scores of very clean and polished lines and only one platform. The porters there, as at a great many of the

provincial stations in Hungary, are rather worse than oneself at German. To assist anyone who should find himself attempting to cope with them, I will give away three of my most precious words of Hungarian. They are as follow, with the pronunciation in brackets: Portás (Portarsh), meaning porter; Kis-Kocsi (Kish-Koachshee), meaning taxi; and Szálló (Sahlow), meaning hotel. With these you cannot go far wrong. And if you know Nem, which means No, and Koosh (wrongly spelt, that), meaning Shut-up, you are absolutely invincible. The hotels in Szombathely are good, the wine and music excellent, and the baths adequate.

Although the population of Szombathely has grown from a mere handful to more than fifty thousand, it is not a large place. Or, rather, it is large but compact, not the rambling, uneven, unfinished thing that is your Central Hungarian town. Here there are three main centres: the street in which are the hotels and the shops and the chief cinema, and the market and the cathedral squares. From these three centres the residential streets of the town radiate. These residential quarters, architecturally and æsthetically unimportant, are worth walking through. For this reason, that you will see two types of residence only: town-peasant places which are not picturesque in their poverty, and extremely pretentious upper middle-class villas which strive, with awful futility, to be aristocratic. What you most certainly will not see is the type of house which is the outward emblem of all the amazing solidity of an English or Colonial or American middle class.

And, when you know Hungary a little more fully, you will, I imagine, have the same impression as I have: that the absence of a genuine town bourgeoisie is perhaps the country's greatest misfortune.

In England, a country of gregarious folk, the national meeting-places of the various classes are the clubs, the ballrooms, the playing-fields, and the sports grounds. In Hungary, the aristocracy meet mostly (except in the case of Budapest) in each other's houses. For the class inhabiting the pretentious villas there are the coffee-houses. For the peasants, the market which is held twice a week in the market-square. In Szombathely, this square is cobbled, lined on three sides by shops (mostly run by Jews), banks and insurance offices. (In passing, I would remark that, although dreadfully hard up, Hungary must possess more banks and insurances in proportion to its size than any other country in the world.) These shops and offices are good buildings, some of them fine, and they have a Western flavour. The square, though, on a market day, has a flavour entirely its own: Hungarian.

A fascinating thing this flavour, composed of peasant men, women and children, excited, away for an hour or so from the soil, arguing, sweating, bargaining. Arguing because they love it; sweating on account of the energy that they put into their discussions; bargaining about the most amazing variety of things you could imagine.

Variety! And life! Here are colour, jostle, warmth, movement, smell, sound, suspicion, satisfaction, sorrow. But never boredom. Even in

sorrow, your Hungarian peasant is an enthusiast. And the diversity of the wares displayed! A woman there sells mauve-coloured cabbages from a heap on the ground beside her. The man next door cobbles shoes and shouts the price of leather. To the right of him a slip of a girl with wispy, untidy hair, and enormous black eyes, mounts guard over a stall of tawdry orange and red embroidery. Further to the right again, a heavy fellow has charge of a meat barrow on which are arranged sides of bacon, unbroken masses of greyish-white fat, dreadfully pungent Salami, and limp-looking pieces of steak. The next pitch is occupied by a woman with a veil over her head, and looking like a Russian madonna grown old, who is selling scarlet Paprika fruit from her twin basketsful. Huge, dark purple-black, or rich lime-yellow dahlias are the stock of the aged madonna's neighbour. A wild gipsy fellow, with oiled black hair, jutting thin nose, and the hands of a conjurer, has a booth a little further on into whose cavernous depths he lures people with incredible success and persuades them to part with a few *heller* in return for flashlight photographs of themselves. On his right a very young boy with deep wrinkles in his brow and exceedingly white teeth is doing a brisk trade in pairs of ducks, tied together at the feet and held up at arms' length with the blood running purple in their heads. An old man and woman, the neighbours of the duck boy, chant a monotone litany in praise of the brown, coarse clay drinking vessels, bowls and wine jars which are strewn on the ground in front of them. . . .

And so on the whole way round the square, a diversity of goods and a medley of people. Men, women, children. Old, young, fat, thin, ugly, lovely, Jews and Hungarians, peasants and gipsies. No peasant dress, for in this part of Hungary they are only brought out on very special occasions. No coloured dress, that is. But the women wear their many voluminous skirts, which give them the air of being perpetually with twin, the married with a dark cloth over their heads, the virgins with their hair exposed, and the women have an air about them which is distinct. The men with their tightish trousers tucked into their long black boots, the second best black Sunday hat covering thick dark hair. Those are the peasants, the men strong and amazingly handsome, the women over twenty looking twice their age. The Jews who shop at the market dress in western style, have gloves on their hands or rings on their fingers, and do not compare well with the peasants.

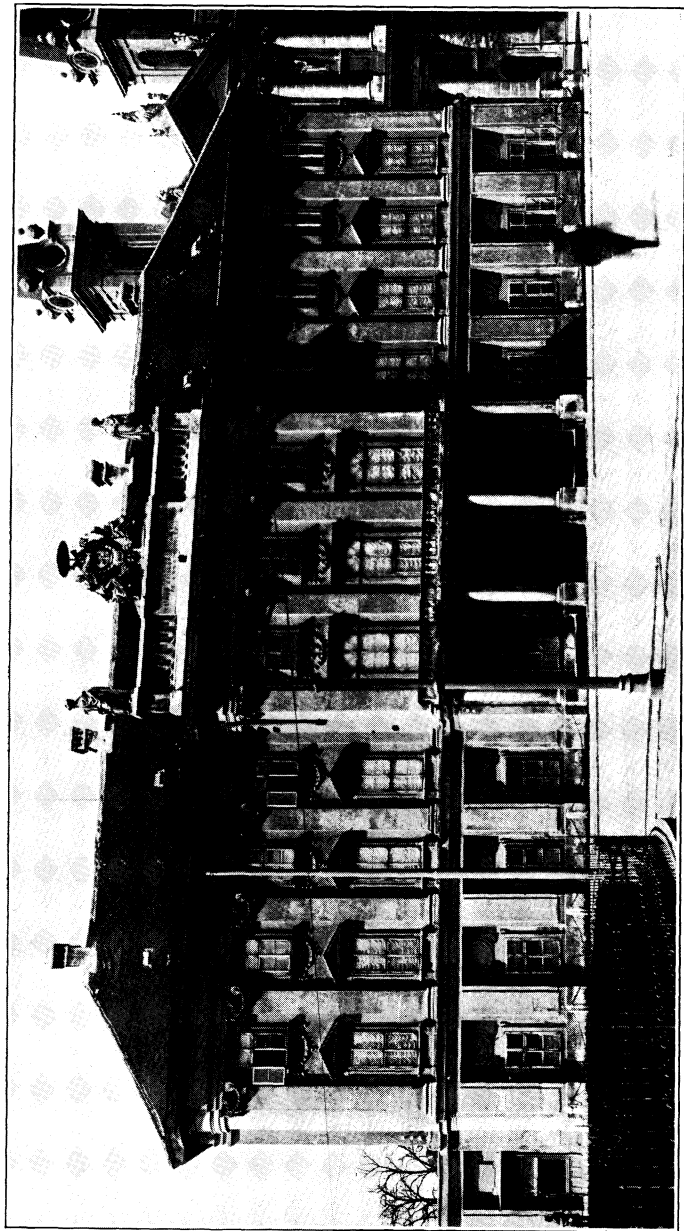
At midday the market is at its height. The peasants and the Jews are packed together in a solid mass on that cobbled square. Peasant carts, in the shafts of which stand patient oxen or disillusioned horses, form a ring round the mass. The air is hot and thick, and the meat and the dahlias which have not been sold are wilting. A self-conscious motor-car picks its way through the stragglers. A tram clangs past, ridiculously small, clanging importantly. A policeman in a wonderful helmet salutes the occupant of the car and moves on, murmuring the equivalent of "Now then, you, order there!" No

one in the mass takes the slightest notice. It is too hot, too crowded; there are too many good bargains to make, too many flies . . .

Two hours later the market is over, the throng gone, and all that remains is a litter of cabbage leaves and dahlia petals on the cobbles. If you should happen to be leaving the town at that hour, your car will overtake and pass a series of creeping carts drawn by tired oxen and horses, filled with peasants and purchases, going back to tiny mushroom houses and very large fields.

From the market square, a narrow street, the narrowness accentuated by the tallness of the buildings on the left side, leads to the cathedral square. There is an antique shop well worth visiting in this street. This shop is typical of Hungary, a place in which a larger proportion of good than bad things can be bought. If you want to buy something, go in. The proprietor is an old friend of mine, and even more of a recommendation is the fact that he can speak reasonably good French or English. In this shop there is always something worth while to be had: a piece or so of old Herend, that most exquisite Hungarian porcelain; or a bowl or wine jar of the lovely earthenware which the Szekelys in old Transylvania were fond of hundreds of years ago; or one, two or three, of the richly jewelled trinkets which your Magyar aristocrat loved so childishly less than a century ago. Buy, if you wish to buy at all, your remembrances of Hungary in the smaller towns of the provinces. There you can find genuine stuff at bargain prices. Budapest is impossible, for

BISHOP'S PALACE, SZOMBATHELY



already in the capital it is necessary to pay dearly for indifferent fakes.

Over the way from the antique shop is a bakery, into the windows of which you should look. There you will see bread and cakes baked in two entirely characteristic Hungarian shapes, the tulip and the human heart.

The cathedral square in Szombathely is genuine Austro-Hungarian. Szily, the man who conceived the idea of this square, was, despite a cosmopolitan education, a fervent Hungarian. The men who carried out his idea were Austrians. One of them, an architect named Héfele, a Tyrolese, had already to his credit a number of very beautiful buildings in Austria and Germany, including the fine palace of Cardinal Batthyány at Pressburg. Twenty years after the founding of the bishopric of Szombathely, the two most perfect buildings in that square also stood to his name.

The whole of the north side of the square is taken up with the palace, the cathedral, and the seminary, standing side by side. Of the three buildings, externally at any rate, the palace is by far the most striking. This is a perfect specimen of classic-baroque architecture, an edifice having line, proportion, and a marvellously controlled richness of movement. It answers all the tests of beauty in a building, even that most difficult of all, which is whether it is living or not. Rarely—in Hungary never—have I seen a wonderful piece of architecture which gave a more certain impression of having a soul. Looking at this palace from the outside, at

the rounded columns supporting the balcony, at the square pillars of the whole façade, at the delicate tracery of the upper windows, at the classic simplicity of the lower ones, one is compelled again to marvel at the force of that first bishop, who caused this magnificent place to be raised in the midst of a village of three thousand inhabitants.

Before going on to look at the cathedral, you should see the interior of the palace. The main staircase, leading out of a highly domed inner court, is a lovely affair of slightly worn limestone. It is broad enough for six horsemen to ride up abreast, and the middle of the stairs is covered with a dark, wine-red carpet. The stretch of the walls, washed white as are those and the dome of the court, is unbroken, save for a gigantic representation in oils of the crucifixion, which takes up the whole of one panel. This painting is a glorious thing in dark, tortured colours which are thrown into living (no, dying) relief by the surrounding white walls. Quite apart from its beauty, incidentally, the painting is of great value, for it is a middle sixteenth-century work by a Mexican.

At the top of the staircase, a corridor, hung with the portraits of all the bishops of Szombathely from Szily to the present day, has a number of guest rooms opening off from it. Each of the rooms is furnished and hung in a different period, but the first, a fairly large Empire room, is the most interesting. For it was here that a piece of post-war Hungarian history was made. It was in this room that King Karl of Hungary, who had been crowned

Emperor of Austria, spent ten days, from March 26 to April 5, in 1921, on the occasion of his first return to Hungary to try and regain one of his thrones.

Shortly after his arrival in Szombathely a message was sent to the King stating that the Small Entente were mobilizing, and that if the King remained Hungary would suffer yet another invasion. At the time, Karl was ill in bed, suffering terribly with pain; but he took no notice of his illness and insisted on getting up and making ready to leave the country. This, however, he could not do. He was too weak. He fell down in a faint. For a further four days this unfortunate king lay in the palace suffering terribly. His kingdom was lost to him, his health already failing, and every moment that he remained in Hungary he was endangering his country's further existence. By the servant who tended him at the time, I was told, that out of many Princes, Bishops, Ministers, and celebrities that he had encountered, none could equal Karl for stoical calm and fervent piety. It is a good thing to reflect a moment on that servant's words. Many harsh, many cruel, few kind things have been said of Hungary's last King. Here, at least, was something good.

From the passage in which are the guest rooms, a turret staircase leads to the third floor of the palace, where is the large library. This is worth seeing. It was the second bishop, Cardinal Herzan, who, compelled by the revolution to fly from Rome, and given this bishopric, founded the library. From Rome he brought with him five thousand volumes,

and from that time to this the number has hardly varied. Indeed, it would be difficult to add to such a collection. Any single book which you take down at random from the shelves is an exquisite piece of work, and the folios of Renaissance engravings are sufficient to induce kleptomaniacal tendencies in the most sternly proper of people. In the library there are, too, the fifteenth century antiphonalia collected by Szily and a wonderfully preserved thirteenth century manuscript of a nocturnale.

One could go on indefinitely almost through this palace, from room to room and from object to object in each of them. The place is a museum of beautiful things. But I am not writing a catalogue, so let me conclude this description by saying that, no matter what is *not* looked at, it is absolutely imperative that you see the large banqueting room. Here is the sort of place in which one can imagine great things being done, the sort of room where occasions arise and are dealt with promptly. The proportions of the banqueting room are magnificent, the length and breadth of the parquet floor being forty-five feet, and the height of the frescoed ceiling thirty-five feet from the ground. The walls, as well as the ceiling, were painted by Maulbertsch, the scenes being taken from the days of Roman Sabaria.

Externally the palace is the most strikingly lovely of the cathedral buildings. By the side of it, and bordered on the left by the seminary, the cathedral has a little the air of having been sandwiched in at the last minute. But if the outside is not very good, the interior is amazingly beautiful. The moment

one is inside the doors, the tremendous loftiness, combined, so to say, with a human expansiveness, causes one to experience the same ecstatic struggle for realization that do the coastline of North Africa, the blue of the Southern Seas, the lights of Budapest by night, or any of the special beauty one knows.

Africa, the Southern Seas, and the lights of Budapest are not good symbols. There is too much colour in them. They are, despite an unmistakable fineness, too carnal. And there is nothing the least carnal about this church. Its beauty is quiet, proportioned, restrained, peaceful. At the same time, startlingly like the beauty of a sleeping person. It *is* a body—being built in the form of a cross—the only difference between it and a human body is that the church is resting with its arms outstretched and a human being generally sleeps with the arms at the sides. After visiting this church many times, I came to the eventual conclusion that it had the air of Christ taken down from the cross, lying there with shut eyes, his arms outspread, a look of extraordinary tranquillity having dismissed the signs of heart-break from his face.

Maulbertsch who made the paintings in the banqueting room in the palace was to have done the same thing here in the church, but he died immediately after completing the preliminary drawings, and his pupil, Winterhalder, completed the work. The colouring in all the work is beautiful, but that and the figuring of the painting in the ceiling of the high-domed sanctuary are simply magni-

ficent. In this domed sanctuary, all the peacefulness of the whole church is centralized.

The cathedral organ is a powerful instrument, but on Sunday, when the church is filled for a low mass and the congregation, mostly of the type of peasant whom you saw in the market place, is singing the Hungarian hymns, it can hardly make itself heard above the packed voices. The building is still amazingly beautiful, but it has lost its air of quietness and restraint. Lost, too, its Austrian character. Héfele, Maulbertsch, and Winterhalder . . . between them they made a church which, empty, is amazingly lovely. But filled with a Hungarian peasant congregation, packed tight into naves and side chapels, calling their hymns with every atom of sheer physical force, the church is transformed into a passionately worshipping body; it becomes, in a word, Szily's finest memorial.

The seminary which stands next to the cathedral must, once upon a time, have been a fine building. The proportion is still there, but recently it has been restored, and that is an art of which the Hungarians, generally speaking, are quite supremely ignorant. With very few exceptions, the whole way through Hungary one cannot help being struck with the uniform unsightliness of the older buildings which have recently been restored. Any vestige of life or spirit that these buildings might once have possessed has been, with the most utter impartiality, squeezed from them. The explanation of this unhappy state of affairs lies, I imagine, in the fact that Hungary has always been late in catching up with the architec-

tural feeling of the rest of Europe, and that at the present moment the Victorian era, which inspired so many horrors in England, is only now making itself fully felt in Hungary.

Externally, the hospital on the outskirts of Szombathely is a classic example of the Victorian mode. Inside it is the most delightful and modern institution of its kind that I have seen anywhere in Europe or America. If for no other reason than to have an illness in this hospital, it is well worth anyone's while to journey to this town in Western Hungary. Everything that is most up-to-the-minute in the way of operating, sterilizing, X-raying, automatic-massage, sun-bathing, and electrical-treatment appliances is installed, and the accommodation for private patients is infinitely superior to that for which I have paid £20 a week on board ship. Actually, this accommodation consists of bedroom, bathroom and sitting-room, food *à la carte*, service, nursing, lighting, and medicines, all in at a charge of £2 5s. a week in English money. A peasant can secure treatment in a ward for not more than ten people, with a communal sitting-room and sun-balcony, and all food and incidentals, for the sum of one shilling and tenpence a day in English money. If he (or she) is unable to pay, admittance is secured on a doctor's order, the State defraying the expenses. It sounds like a Bolshevist advertisement, but it happens to be true.

It is something typically Hungarian, this hospital. Here you have a building which must at the very least have cost £500,000 to put up and equip. The

place, besides housing a maximum number of 800 patients a day, has a large staff of resident surgeons and nurses to pay and provide for. As well as this there are electricity for treatment and cooking and heating, supplies of radium, and servants to be accounted for. If every patient paid £2 5s. a week, the weekly income would only amount to £1,800, and as it is, of course, it is very much less than that. Yes, this hospital is something typically Hungarian, an institution conceived on magnificent lines and run, I am very certain, at a magnificent loss.

CHAPTER III

FULL FIELDS

I DO not know where I first saw that phrase, "the smell of a full field". All I can say is that I came across it many years ago, and that invariably when I have loved a fertile countryside it has recurred to my mind. I have been in several lands to which the phrase was applicable, but never such an one as Hungary.

When I first went to Hungary, I stayed for an eventful and exceedingly tiring week in Vienna *en route*. On the morning that I left the capital of Austria for Szombathely I was so tired that I slept from the moment the train pulled out of the *südbahnhof* until we reached the frontier at Sopron. It may have been the excitement—if you can call it that—of having my luggage scrutinized that caused me to wake up, or it may have been the knowledge that I was on the threshold of Hungary. Which of these two factors contributed to my awakening I cannot definitely say, but I like to feel that it was the latter, that I was being influenced by the land of full fields.

The smell of a full field . . . It is a good phrase, worth stopping a moment to look at. The notion one derives is of those things that two dissimilar poets have loved. Rupert Brooke wrote about wet,

scarred ploughlands, and his words are inspiring. But Brooke—as is here right—comes second; the man who has best suggested the fields of Hungary is a Magyar, Elek Benedek. Listen to this:

“List’ to the threshing machine,
 Mellow and rhythmic its tune,
 Kernels of finest ripe grain,
 It renders to us as its boon.
 It starts at the dawn of the morn,
 It stops but late in the day,
 And ever and ever we hear
 The mellow and rhythmic lay.”

He writes of the song of the threshing machine, a song vitally reminiscent of Hungary. I knew this poem before coming to Hungary, and, thinking of it on this first morning, I marvelled again at its beauty.

For outside, on either side of the single railway line, were field after field, and then more fields, of ripening corn. Not only did these fields stand side by side bordering a railway track, but as well they stretched so far as the eye could see, and then, when the eye could no longer definitely distinguish corn, there was a haze of gold which told of further crops.

“And ever and ever we hear
 The mellow and rhythmic lay.”

There is no song of the threshing machine to listen to and be moved by in the earlier summer months, but the crop which is to be threshed is there. In Vienna, a friend had said to me: “Going to

Hungary? I *am* sorry for you." Well, I am sorry for him, who has missed much. For what is there more beautiful to see than an expanse of living gold which sways in the breeze and can croon to itself? Field after field of deepening corn, splashed at intervals with the red of poppies and the ripe blue of cornflowers.

Walking, or standing still, by the side of a cornfield, there is a suggestion of many things bright and beautiful; of creatures like the field-mouse; of the grain which will be bread, which will feed millions; of the effort which peasants have put into the tilling of the ground and the sowing of seed; of the grey dust, thick about your feet, which trailed after those peasants as they tramped to and from their work; of the white and fragile acacia blossoms which in spring turn the peasant man's thoughts to the image of his warm, dark maid; of many of the things which go to make up life in Hungary.

Corn, whenever you see it growing, is like that. It makes you feel that it is an adjunct of life peculiarly Magyar. Other countries need corn, but not so tremendously as Hungary. The Chinese have their rice; the Maoris sweet potatoes; Americans can live on a hot dog; the Hindus chew betel-nut. But the Magyar must have his corn. It is a part of him. Corn to the Hungarian peasant means bread; as well, it means life. At his worst, your Magyar peasant would live to eat; generally, though, it is the other way round.

When you are in Hungary, make a point of seeking out the peasant embroideries of the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries. (The museum at Szombathely has a good selection.) You will see then what I mean about their love of corn. Look at these embroideries, especially the church ones, and notice the motifs. They are almost always flower or "nature" motifs; and the ear of corn, full and golden, poised at the top of a slender, darker stalk, is generally the most beautifully worked.

One day in the early part of July I got up early to watch the peasants at work on the harvest. I drove with my host in an open, two-horse carriage from the château to the cornfield, a distance of two kilometres through thick and slightly swaying lanes of stalks. It was hot when we arrived at the particular field to be cut, the sort of heat that can be seen as well as felt, the kind of weather that causes one to sweat at the mere thought of exertion. The sky was like the Indian ocean on a dead calm day; and the horizon, stroked by unreal-looking acacias, was also Eastern. The corn had deepened, overnight almost, from gold to a full, lightish brown. A pity, I thought, to massacre this glorious, living stuff. And while I was thinking thus stupidly the harvesters arrived. They looked already a little tired and worn, as though life could be hard in Hungary, and I remarked to my friend that eight o'clock was an appalling hour to start work!

"Eight!" he replied, "they don't start at eight. They have already cut one field, and now they will mow this one."

They had been working since four, and they would continue, with an hour at midday for food

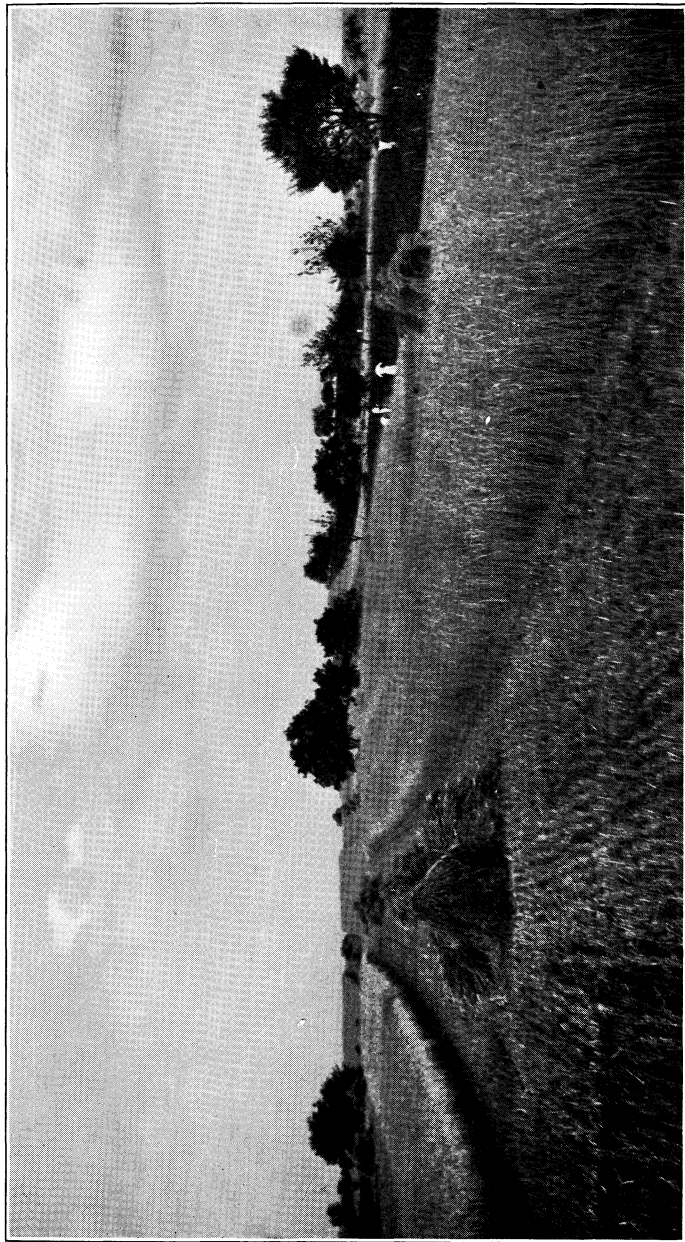


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

FULL FIELD OF CORN

and rest, till sundown. Fifteen hours a day cutting corn they spent during the harvest. Fifteen solid hours of wielding a scythe. I once had six months on a tea plantation in India: the natives there were puny in their capacity for work compared with these Hungarians. In New Zealand I have ploughed and worked on my own soil, and as well I have milked cows and acted as midwife to ewes in season. I thought I was doing rather well in those days, but it was nothing compared with these peasants.

In the sight of a field of corn being mowed by hand you have perfect rhythm. There were twenty-four workers in that party which arrived at eight o'clock of a perspiring morning to cut a particular field. Twelve men and twelve women. The first man led off with a few easy strokes of his scythe, cutting his way through the rich stuff. The woman who was working with him followed in his footsteps, two metres behind, gathering up in great armfuls and stacking the stalks cut by the man. Then a second man started, and a second woman; then a third pair; and so on, until the whole two dozen workers were spread out in a diagonal across the field. The scythes of the men rose and fell, from left to right and back again, in long, powerful sweeps. With each forward movement of a blade an army of cornstalks was mowed to the ground and raked into line by the three-pronged, wooden fork attached to the mowing implement.

Soon the entire line of scythes was working together in unison. The blades flashed backwards

and forwards with a metronomic regularity; and the sun, catching sight of the shining steel, sent out ripples of pale gold on to it, making a play of light incredibly lovely. Backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards, a multiple, living metronome, setting the pace of Hungarian life.

The aristocracy of Hungary are a fine people. They have a superb culture, ideals, and breeding; but the peasant has my greatest affection. He is staunch, strong, brave, and neither too imaginative nor the reverse. Full fields, and the peasants who fill and to an extent empty them! For it is impossible ever completely to empty a Hungarian field. Cut the corn, and, when it is gathered and taken off to be threshed, you will find a clover crop peeping through the baked ground. And when, after time and rain and sun, that clover has grown tall and immensely green and has been cut for hay, after the plough has turned over the soil, and the discs and harrows have smoothed it, then a catch-crop of vivid emerald oats appears with magic suddenness to delight your eye.

I must repeat that corn is something vitally important in the life of the peasant. It has for him the significance that the Manna in the desert had for the children of Moses. Speaking generally, most of the corn produced in Hungary is owned by the Seigneurial class, and in return for gathering the golden crop the peasant is paid in kind. Thus he lives, since corn is the material of his bread, directly from the hand of his master. In this way corn has come to be a link, symbolic as well as actual,

between master and man. A peasant labourer when he sees a field full of corn does not, I imagine, consciously think of it as being either tall, or graceful, or golden; his immediate thoughts are probably something like this:

“The Count (or Prince, or Baron, or plain Mister) has a good (or bad) crop this year. There is much (or little) corn to be cut. I shall sweat greatly (or moderately) and shall be burnt more (or less) than usual. And finally I shall earn enough (or insufficient) bread to live on until next harvest.”

Those are his immediate, quick, conscious thoughts. While he is working, he may or may not notice the “form” of the crop. But he has been able to stitch silken, golden cornstalks into his embroidery because of those first thoughts of his, which were so vital, essential, and complete.

But corn and its brothers are summer crops; they come and they go, and already autumn is beginning to think of appearing on the scene. Here, in September, there is a difference in the content of those full fields and the sky above them, in the whole ensemble of the countryside, in the mind of the person regarding that countryside. The song of the threshing-machine can be heard throughout the hours of daylight, and in the green and gold mystery of the evening sky there is a foreboding. In Hungary, summer is wonderful and the richness of corn glorious, and one hates to part from them. But corn is golden stuff, a shining dazzle which, if seen for too long, can obscure the pattern of a whole countryside.

In autumn one sees the country in detail, the land of the peasants. It was not until I had spent much time in gazing at autumn fields in Hungary that I began to see into the mind of the peasant. There is much of the matter of a full field in their character. They are dark, vivid, smelling a little of effort and even the plainest has something overwhelmingly attractive.

On first going to Hungary, one is inclined to wrinkle one's nose at a tang of sweat clinging to these field-workers, but one cannot help noticing them. The young are short-limbed, straight and sturdy of body, with warm, dark, or rich blue eyes, and hair that is thick and magnificently black. Emotion plays easily across their faces, the colour of well-ripened corn, over which the usually high, rather Mongolian cheekbones cast a subdued shadow. There is grace in their movements, the grace that comes to bodies in which every muscle and sinew, while toughened by labour, still remains pliant. The mothers and fathers of these young peasants look old enough to be their grandparents. Their hair, though still thick, is grey, or even white. Their bodies are bent, their faces lined and sallow; and one must look deep into the eyes to find the sparkle of life. Yet about these people—as about their children—there is an atmosphere—I do not say air—of vitality! At first you do not notice this atmosphere; but later it comes easier to look into the lines of faces and the distortion of bodies, to analyse wrinkles and swellings, to peer and search. The result of this analysis is that, seeing with more sympathetic eyes, one finds oneself

gazing at the people who are the backbone of the country.

I wrote of the rhythm of the harvester as he swung his body to and fro to the stroke of his scythe. Take a look at his work when the harvest is over and done with and you will see the same harvester as an artist with a very definite knowledge and love of his art. As well you will see him as an individualist, and individualism is a thing to bear in mind when you come to look at Hungarian art as a whole. The peasant as conscious artist and conscious individualist is represented by his own strip of land, which you may see him tending in the autumn months. Later on I shall show the personal strip of land as an important item in the peasant household budget. Here it is something better than revenue-producing; is, rather, self-expressing.

In October when the plough is running through the earth, there is a sight of passionate beauty. Not the great traction plough which the Seigneur used to scatter up his immense square fields, but the single-furrow implement of the peasant. Twin oxen draw this small plough, which is guided by a man as brown as the soil being thrown up like water cleft by the bows of a ship. The soil comes asunder in shining, coarsely shaped clods that glisten like great dulled lumps of cut steel. If the morning is cold, as it often enough is, grey clouds of vapour escape from the mouths of men and beasts, and a cloudy thickness of grey-white incense rises from the ground itself, floats upwards out of sight, and is received by God as an offering of prime worth, since it is the

result of good effort in the world which He exerted Himself to create.

When I ploughed my land in a colony, I felt differently altogether to the Hungarian peasant cultivating his strip of personal property. I used to think: "Well, here are four acres to be ploughed. Let us get into it—horses and myself—and get it done as quickly as possible." I hated my land! Not so the peasant. He *loves* his soil in the manner that the earlier Forsytes loved their mite of property; in the manner that the genuine artist loves the subjects of his paintings; in the way that Bach, say, loved the slowly increasing number of symbols on his score-sheet. The peasant, I am certain, expresses himself more fully in the cultivation of his plot than he does in the creating of his children. He is in greater sympathy with his ground than he is with his wife.

In the earth which has been cultivated by him one sees something of the peasant's mentality. The Magyar agricultural labourer is an emotional being. His music, his poetry, his house, his church . . . all go to show that colour—often the more obvious colour—will to an extent dominate him. Yet it is impossible to go through an anthology of popular Hungarian songs, through the most average Hungarian village, without experiencing that strong sense of solidity that the idea of permanence always produces. The Hungarian peasant is often emotional, but at the same time his roots are very firmly embedded in the soil of Hungary. In the strip of private property, when it has been ploughed, disced,

harrowed, rolled and sown, one sees the peasant ideas and ideals of life exposed. And those ideas and ideals, preserved intact through a thousand years of battling history, have enabled Hungary to remain to-day what she has always been since her beginning as nation: The Bulwark of the West against the Tide of the East.

CHAPTER IV

THE VILLAGE

ANYWHERE within twenty minutes' drive of Szombathely you will see those full fields. Driving out of the town is a great joy. One is so quickly in the country, the real Hungary which is gloriously friendly. The roads in the west are good to motor over and beautiful to look at. Cornfields to right and left, sprinkled with red and blue flowers; acacia trees dividing road and fields; lumbering wagons and carts, drawn by oxen with huge curving pairs of horns; casual statues of Our Lady or her son at the turn of the road; and the air! . . .

A priceless thing this air, something like the finest Tokay. A blend of the perfumes of hay drying in the sun, and corn ripening, and clover already coming through where hay has just been cut down, and dust and openness and life. You go on drinking the air, and, like Tokay, it has the effect of intoxicating you, so that you suddenly accelerate like a lunatic and send the car round impossible corners at impossible speeds.

One of the most delightful things about motoring in Hungary is, that no matter how impossible your speed you never seem to kill anyone. Geese, yes, dozens of them if you motor sufficiently! but humans almost never. This is strange when you consider

that villages are very often just round the most unlikely corners, and that small children stray about the road in just as haphazard a manner as do flocks of geese. The beginning of a village is unmistakable. You drive through an avenue of tall and dark green, closely-planted Lombardy poplars, emerging on to a broad, badly formed main and only street, inhabited by the most amazing collection of living beings. Flocks of beautifully white, terribly wicked geese which screech and scream in a demoniac manner; long, lean, grey peasant pigs rooting in the dust for some stray morsel of food; stray broods of fluffy yellow chickens, which have lost their mothers; and young, very young, children, generally without any form of underclothing, all these play together in the main street. If you stop your car, they will come up to you and be friendly, all except the geese who are invariably bombastic, and of whom I am terrified.

D. H. Lawrence would have been happy in a Hungarian village; so, too, would most of those who have broken their hearts over the state of the world to-day. Lawrence would have loved it for the simple reason that in such a place is to be found the quality which he worshipped, vitality; the heart-broken would have been happy for the same reason. This vitality is not easy to describe. It is composed of many ingredients: the utter refusal of the geese to go away until their curiosity has been satisfied; the indefatigable energy of the pigs rooting so persistently in barren dust; the inability of the children to get killed; the absence of the children's parents,

whom one knows to be busy either in field or cottage; the strength of the chestnuts growing to the side of the road in defiance of a heat so great that it ought to wither them away; the magnificence of that heat, which is quite surely ripening corn in adjoining fields, which corn when cut will be replaced by some other upward-thrusting crop. Like the heat of the sun, shimmering almost imperceptibly on the horizon, the force of this vitality hovers over the Hungarian village, compelling it to live fully.

If the first impression of a Hungarian village high street, with its geese and chickens and tiny children, is one of haphazard, that impression will to an extent be correct. The Hungarians, for quite some time after their conquest in the ninth century of the territory which is now Hungary, lived a nomad life, moving from place to place, and camping *en route*, in a manner remarkably akin to that of the gipsies. The vagueness of the layout of a village to-day is a vagueness which has lasted through ten centuries. As a proof of my statement, I would ask any traveller in Hungary to notice that it is only when he shall come to a village inhabited by Germans that there is to be remarked that depth of housing which one is accustomed to find in an English village. In villages inhabited by genuine Magyars the houses are strung out in a long line on either side of the road, and it is this prolongation that gives the appearance of a place begun and never properly finished.

As a matter of fact, a Hungarian village to-day, though it still retains the picturesque air of casual-

ness of the old days, is a beautifully united thing. The unofficial chief man in any village not occupied by Germans is the catholic priest. He is more important in the eyes of the people than the Grand Seigneur's principal agent, who invariably inhabits the most attractive house in the village. The priest stands for God and baptisms and marriages and burials, together with corn, the most important things in Hungarian peasant life. The priest is the father of the village, and rightly so, for the catholic religion is the most powerful organization that can be brought to counteract the spiritual powers of the Soviet in Hungary.

Generally of peasant stock, the village priest has but one fault, a passion for ruining the lovely altar of his church by swathing it in bad modern embroideries. Apart from this one weakness he is in every sense of the word admirable. He is almost invariably poor, which is a mercy, since it means that he has not sufficient money to "restore" and thus make hideous his delightful parish house. He is exceedingly hospitable, and will insist on giving you wine and displaying his latest acquisition (generally a new kitchen stove) when you go to see him. His reverence for spiritual authority is splendid, and, when during the Bolshevik outbreak, some of the bishops were seized by the Reds, the village priest carried on with courage and wisdom, preventing the spread of the Soviet idea in the provinces. I admire this man, who has the fighting qualities of the Irish priests I have known in the colonies. And, more than admiration for his fighting qualities, I have a

love of the childlike enthusiasm he displays when exhibiting his precious baroque chalice or his one piece of exquisite church linen.

The houses of the peasants are beautiful, reminding one more than anything else of something by Rackham or Dulac in a book of fairy-tales. Long and low, with brick and plaster walls washed white and roofs of thatch on which grows fairly heavily yellowish-green moss, they stand at right angles to the road and extend backwards for about half the length of the strip of land on which they stand. The windows are small and square, the sills being generally lined with boxes of crimson and white geraniums.

Superficially, as I have said, a Hungarian village may give the impression of not quite knowing the reason for its existence, but closer inspection leaves one with the feeling that there is perfect coherence behind that seeming outer carelessness. In England, the Englishman's home is supposed to be his castle; even more so does this idea apply in Hungary. Indeed, the peasant home, with its small piece of ground, is more of an individual kingdom than a castle. Within the walls of his home, each separate peasant has gathered all the accessories of a kingdom; wife, children, food for family and animals, the animals themselves, firing, oil for lighting, bedding, furnishings, family relics, and all the details that a reasonable king would require for ruling over a dominion. I like greatly this idea of individual kingdoms which one gets in Hungarian villages; hundreds of tiny states acknowledging one

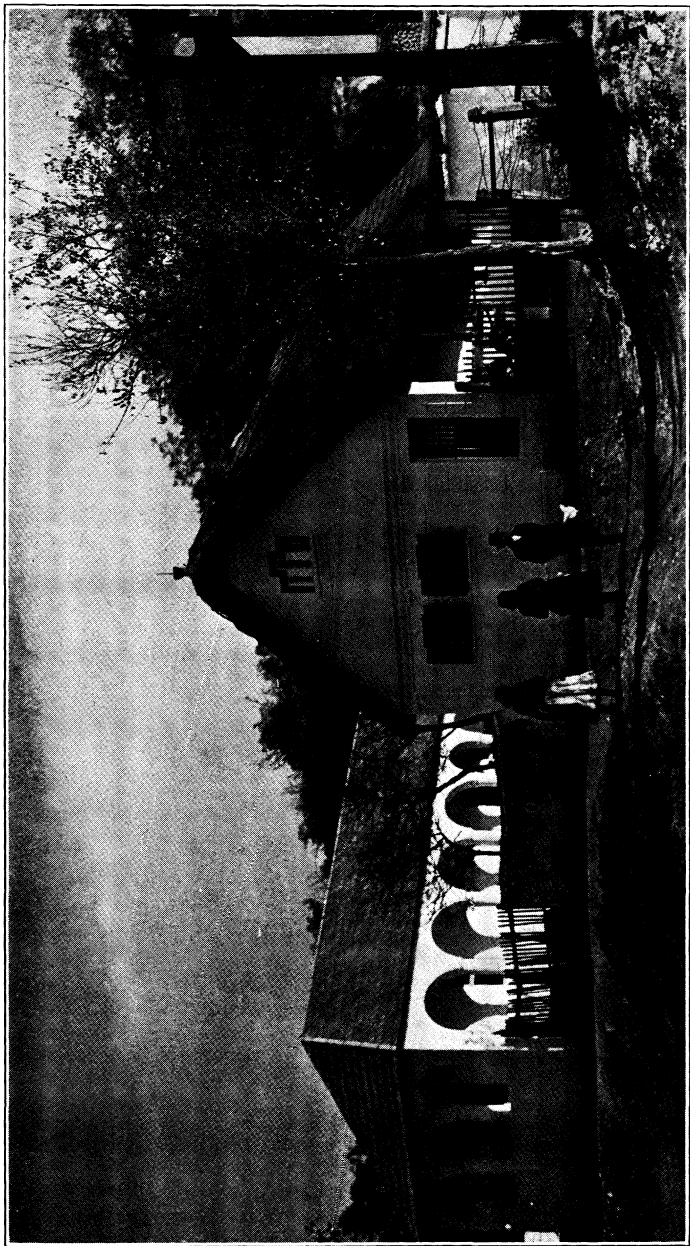


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

VILLAGE HIGH STREET

superior force, which is the Holy Crown of Hungary.

In each village there is an official chief man, who is not the priest. In France, his title would be M. Le Juge. This is a charming individual, a peasant like all the other villagers, but one who on account of a superior intelligence or some similar quality has been selected by the authorities to act as a liaison between the village and the crown. The house of this official chief is so typical of a village dwelling that it is worth while describing one such place.

The dominant note in a Hans Andersen exterior is the veranda which runs three-quarters of the length of the house, parallel to an unformed drive over which the farm cart or wagon is driven to the stable at the rear of the house. Though this veranda is typical throughout Hungary of the village house, it has always struck me as being reminiscent of Italy. The reason for this, I think, is that the rounded arches, with their coating of whitewash, and the scarlet and golden cannae growing about the pillars, stand out shimmeringly against a sky of such vital blue as I have seen nowhere other than in the Bay of Naples. However that may be, these arched verandas are typical of peasant architecture throughout Hungary, and they give a very definite poise to an architecture otherwise inclined to be undistinguished. On the veranda, as you are going into the house, you will see splashes of rich colouring: either ripening golden maize cobs, or strings of scarlet Paprika fruit, hung from the wall out of harm's way.

There are four rooms in the house, a show bed-

room, a connubial bedroom, a parlour, and a kitchen. In parts of Hungary, such as Mezökövesd, where embroidery is still an art, the show bedroom is a glorious affair of beautifully worked pillow-cases and bedspreads and curtains and attractively painted furniture, but in most parts it is of interest principally because it is the greatest visible sign of respectability and surplus wealth. This chamber is never by any chance used by a guest; but it is always there, a symbol of the seaworthiness of the domestic bark. The connubial apartment is barely furnished with two tall beds piled high with many pillows and covered over with a quilt embroidered with the inevitable tulip. This embroidery is not usually good, the imported dyes used in colouring the threads being vastly inferior to the old-fashioned variety which were made from herbs and wild flowers. Colouring in general is nowadays a crude affair in Hungary, the crucifixes and embroideries to be seen in most peasant houses being of a blatant rather than an original hue. Besides the peasant and his wife there are in the connubial bedroom three or four children. Where they sleep I could never quite discover, but I imagine that the floor is their resting place. Such a lack of privacy as exists in a peasant household would be unendurable to a more "refined" people than the Hungarians; fortunately for them, though, they regard the fact of their children sharing the same room as the parents as being perfectly right and proper and an indication of the spirit of give-and-take existing in the home-circle.

Once when I visited the widow of an old man who had died, I was taken into the bedroom and shown the corpse lying lonely in its coffin. In accents of pity, the old woman told me that it was the first time in his life that her husband had slept by himself in a room.

The parlour of M. Le Juge's house is the centre of village officialdom. Here there are a huge safe, a table with a few forms and rubber-stamps on it, and photographs of the Archduke Otto, or Admiral Horty, the Regent, sometimes of both. The village chief is very proud of the Regent's photograph, and will explain how he holds office *directly* from him; but in homes where the peasants belong to the Legitimist (Otto) party, the photograph of the young Habsburg is an object of worship.

The long, inverted V-shaped roofs of the houses are used during the winter months for storing, not only the grain harvested in summer, but also root crops for the animals' winter feed, logs for the fire, tools and any odds and ends which cannot be accommodated in the sheds below. In these sheds, as in the rooms inhabited by the family, is to be found the most scrupulous cleanliness. Whether it be pigs, or geese, or chickens, or grain, or oil, or farm implements which are kept there, the various sheds, no matter at what time of day you may happen to visit them, always have the appearance of having just been swept and dusted. At the end of the narrow strip on which the cottage is built is a larger building, and in this, when the harvest is over, you can see all the wealth owned by a peasant. For this

shed is used for the storing of the hay, oats, or maize grown during the earlier summer months on the personal strip of land to which I referred in the previous chapter, and which is to maintain the pigs or cows or poultry which the peasant will rear during the winter, and which when sold next year will return him the only fluid cash he will handle for twelve months.

For peasants, as I have said, are paid in kind for the corn harvest; and the same applies to the gathering of maize, oats, grapes, sugar-beet, or whatever it may be. As well as a percentage of the harvest, the Seigneur makes an allowance of the personal strip of arable land, in addition to the cottage in which the labourer is housed. No actual money, though, is given to the servant by his lord. If he wants cash to buy himself luxuries, he must procure some livestock and rear and eventually sell it at market.

M. Le Juge himself will tell you all these details if you question him, but he is an awkward sort of person to get hold of. During the day, his exalted office will not excuse him from working on the land like his less important fellowmen; but if you go down to the village *csárda* (inn) of an evening, you are quite likely to come across him exchanging a glass with his friends.

A village inn, or *csárda*, in Hungary is something unique. There is a mixed perfume of slightly bitter wine, sunshine, sawdust, recent exertion, and Paprika, which I, for one, find quite enchanting. Next to the wooden table on which stands your Gothic bottle of wine there is sure to be a dark

peasant with an earthenware bowl of pig-and-Paprika stew in front of him; or, if it isn't a peasant with stew, it will be a gipsy with a fiddle and a carafe of wine. There is vitality in the types to be seen in the *csárda* of Hungary, a sense of something kept in hand with which to make a sudden, unexpected effort. Vitality and superb physical fitness! Which is tremendously important among peasant men in Hungary, being, I am sure, a mode of self-expression. Games as we play them are unknown among the peasant class; there are no soccer, rugger, or cricket clubs in the various villages; thus, no means of determining championships. So it is that the men who work in the fields take a pride in the ripples of their muscles and the peculiar shade of tan to which they can induce their skin by exposure to the sun. By comparison with her menfolk, the average Hungarian peasant woman is physically decadent. Strikingly lovely, with her dark complexion, large eyes, regular teeth and fine hair, so far as the early twenties, she is more often than not wrinkled, grey and toothless, by the age of thirty. But when you see these prematurely aged women in church on Sunday, dressed in their bulging, best black dresses, their hair veiled with a dark kerchief, you cannot but be struck with the fine purposefulness of those lined faces and the look of pitiful understanding in their tired eyes.

I spoke of a gipsy. He has a hooked nose, and mad eyes, and slim, long fingers. He looks as if he would like to steal the eye out of your head; but, as that feature is not usually detachable, he will be

quite content to play for you in return for a litre of wine.

Here is music! thin, wild, leaping notes which rush after one another in clutching ecstasy, breaking off unexpectedly into a phrase which is full and soft and strangely troubling. Then it is away again. The brief, soft phrase has done its work in plucking at your heart for a moment; now feeling must leap up and follow this madman's thoughts and fingers, till at last neither he nor you can stand any more and you both sink back and drink deep of your wine. It takes long for night to fall in Hungary in the summer, but the time passes quickly when you listen to a gipsy. When they fiddle, it is their hour. They are of a dynasty of fiddlers, men who have wandered over the earth, torturing others as well as themselves with their music. Even Hungarian peasant men love the gipsy when they listen to his fiddle. For your Hungarian worships music, and the gipsy knows all the Magyar folk tunes. Simple things of half a dozen notes and as many words, which have a softness and a passion that tear at the deepest feelings. Wine is drunk quickly when the gipsy gives his concert in a village *csárda*; and the music and the wine flow to the head; so that a light comes into the peasants' eyes, and they croon and shout their songs in a manner to make one reckless.

When it is over, you will walk through the village to the château of your host, vaguely thinking of plausible excuses for having missed his excellent company and dinner. But do not tell him lies. Say,

simply, that you have been to the *csárda*, where you listened to a gipsy playing the melodies of the Magyars. Your host will be well satisfied; he will tell you that you have been listening to the real Hungary.

At night the village is strangely lovely, gloriously strange. The sky is green as the colour of a peacock's feathers, and the white coats of houses stand out dully against the night. Trees have grown much taller, and the road is enormously broad. The softer light of oil lamps chinks through an occasional window. Of street lamps there are none. Mostly the village sleeps. The church is good in this light, tall and commanding. The gates of the *château* stand out fine and delicate, reminding one of the graces of Maria Theresa's court. In the air there is an extraordinary stillness, which a moon, rising late and the colour of the flesh of ripe melon, seems to interrupt. A movement passes through the sky as you go indoors to sip Tokay. You will be in bed by twelve; the peasant in his fields at five.

CHAPTER V

COUNTRY HOUSE LIFE

AFTER the War, when Bolshevism broke out in Hungary, a friend of mine was taken off to prison and his house and lands were confiscated. In the course of time, the Red Commissioner, who had taken up his quarters in the Count's château, offered to the local peasantry the cornfields of the estate. At that time the revolution was at the pinnacle of its success, and there was no apparent reason why it should not continue to flourish. It would have been the most natural thing in the world for the peasants to leap at the chance of getting some valuable arable land for nothing, had they happened to be lawless rabble instead of the amazingly fine people they actually are. But the peasantry did not avail themselves of this excellent chance of getting rich quickly. Instead, they made to the Commissioner this answer:

"The fields you propose to give us are not yours to dispose of. If the Count offers them to us, then we shall take them. Until he does so, they are his property."

Apart from the fact that it was a good gesture, this answer of the peasantry to one whom they regarded as an interloper is interesting in that it indicates the excellent feeling existing between the

two predominant classes in Hungary, the peasantry and the aristocracy. In any country house in which you may happen to stay in Hungary, you cannot fail to appreciate the sympathetic bond existing between your host and the people of his village. As well you must notice that feudalism in a modified form still exists in the relations of the Seigneur and his dependants. Which is not to say that there is much truth in the story, told me by a friend in London, of the host of a shooting-party in Hungary who, on one of the beaters getting in the line of fire, discharged both barrels of shot into the unfortunate man's body, and insisted on counting him in with the day's bag.

The same friend whose peasants behaved so remarkably well during the revolution grumbled to me one day that his butler, who is a marvel of charm and efficiency, and who incidentally saved his master's life when it had been arranged for the Count to be shot in prison, was obsessed with the notion of educating his son into a "gentleman". Now I may be wrong in saying so, but I do not think that it is possible to educate a boy who is not quite a member of the superb peasant class into a gentleman in one generation.

But I do most emphatically imagine that the son of a Hungarian butler would make a first-class member of the so deficient and so necessary bourgeois class, always assuming that the son was willing to avail himself of the sacrifices his father was prepared to make in order to realize an ideal. I have written this because it gives an excellent

example of the mentality of the average Magyar aristocrat, who, though he can love and respect a peasant, does not appear to realize the value to his country of an undistinguished and solid middle class.

But to return to the butler, who had been responsible for the shattering of yet another of my few illusions concerning life. After fairly extensive wanderings about the world, I had, before visiting Hungary, been under the impression that the English were the best menservants. Some of the bearers one had met in India, and an occasional butler in Southern Germany, had been marvels of efficiency and kindness; but on the whole, taking one thing with another, and not being unduly patriotic, one had been able to lean back after dinner and bore everyone most satisfactorily by pointing out the exact reasons for the superiority of the English. The keynote of an English manservant's superiority is dexterity and a natural superiority of manner. An even greater superiority of manner shifts the odds a shade in favour of the Hungarian butlery. As an illustration of this superiority, there is the classic servant of another friend of mine, who, when his master was compelled to entertain a party of Bolshevist officials, refused to serve the champagne which my friend had so thoughtfully ordered.

"But János," said his master, "these gentlemen like champagne; they have asked me to provide some for dinner."

"I am very sorry, sir," replied János, looking like a scandalized Bishop, "but I cannot serve the cham-

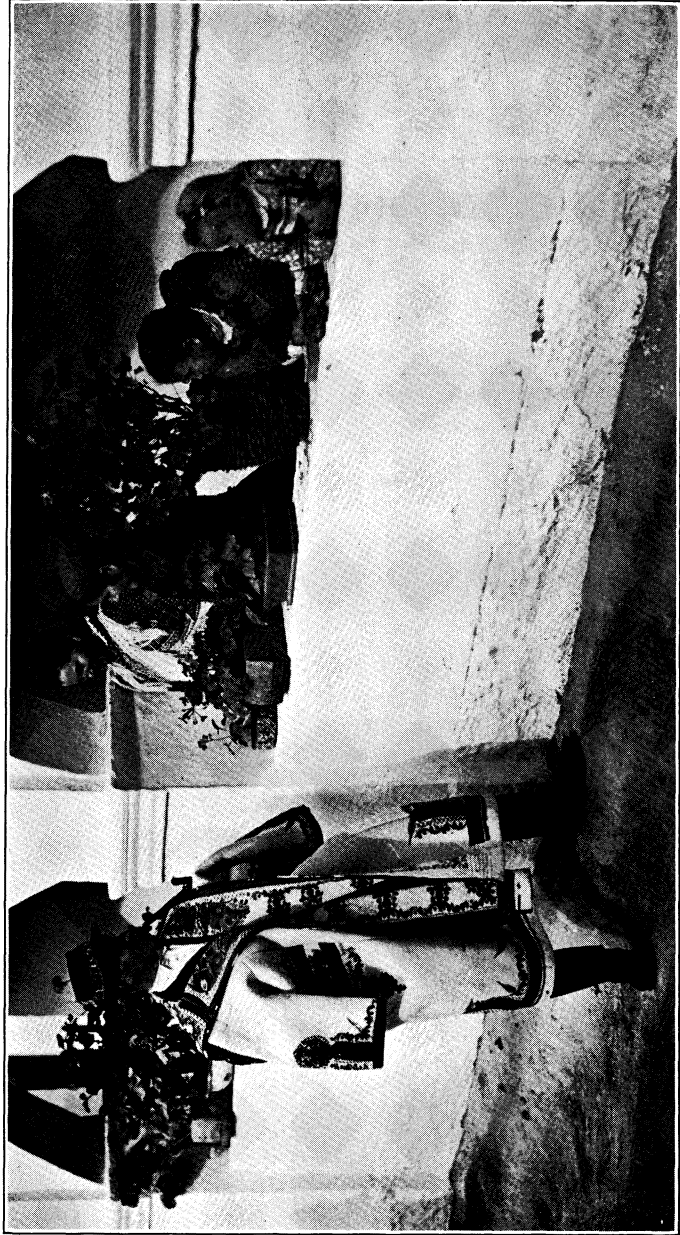


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

PEASANT FAMILY IN NATIONAL COSTUME

pagne. I have been in this house for forty years, sir, and I must tell you, sir, that your father, had he been alive, would have refused to entertain the gentlemen.”

The champagne was not served, and János is alive to-day, odd and unrevolutionary though it may sound. Where the Hungarian butlery really score, and their reason for being interesting as well as admirable, is that, more than any other class in a country which is to-day living on its history, they have the idea of tradition tremendously strongly developed.

Bacon and eggs, I am pleased to say, still taste best when eaten in Great Britain. In Hungary, they are terrible. To begin with, Hungarian bacon is nauseatingly fat; and secondly, the method of cooking, which consists of beating the eggs and the bacon into a sort of omelet paste and then frying the mixture, is discouraging, causing the person who is about to breakfast to wonder whether he was not perhaps a little too generous to himself overnight with the Tokay. But if the English breakfast dish is quite rightly a failure in a Hungarian country house, the rest of the cooking is very good, if you can stand rich food. Dinner, taken at the time that other people lunch, is a small meal but perfect. It must be small for the reason that one is expected to play tennis almost immediately afterwards; it is perfect because, though the actual dishes may be Hungarian, the cooking is frequently French. Paprika, a hot-sweet plant, is freely used in seasoning various dishes. Paprika should be treated with caution—it

is both very hot and very sweet. The only distressing feature about staying in a Hungarian country house is, that if you are there more than a week your figure (if you possess one) will begin to disappear. This tendency to put on weight is accounted for by a positively wanton use of cream in the preparation of the various dishes, more particularly the soups, which are the most delicious I have ever tasted. If your figure is a matter of vital importance, and if at the same time that you are growing fat you hate the idea of curtailing your visit, be of good cheer, for the mineral waters at Budapest are possessed of magical properties which are guaranteed to remove all superfluous weight.

The wines of Hungary apart from Tokay, which on account of its extreme perfection is indescribable, are almost unknown in England. This is unfortunate, for the wines, and more especially the white variety, are remarkably good. In the Badacsony district, in the vicinity of Lake Balaton, there are white wines very nearly comparable to those of Rhineland. It seems a pity that these wines are not sent to England, for the export trade which could be built up would do much to help the revenue of the Hungarian Government, and apart from that one might be enabled occasionally to buy a good wine at a price which was not prohibitive. There is a champagne which one often drinks in Hungary for the production of which the princely family of Batthyányi is responsible. Of this drink, though an English wine merchant informs me that it is not a champagne but a mere sparkling wine, I can only

say that it is excellent, and that its originators deserve to be frequently and publicly venerated. The liqueur most generally drunk is *Barack*, which means Apricot Brandy. This liqueur, though a shade sweet, is not in the least sticky, and is possessed of a soft warmth which extends after two glasses to the uttermost extremities of the body. Be careful of *Barack*! It is insidious, and has been known to cause the downfall of many a better bridge player than myself. As an antidote to this liqueur, there is nothing quite like the coffee which you get after dinner, and which is the best I have tasted anywhere. The requisite conditions for the making of this coffee, according to a Hungarian bishop of my acquaintance, are that the brew should be :

HOT AS HELL
STRONG AS A MAN
SWEET AS A WOMAN . . .
AND WELL MIXED!

Two things which one misses in the country in Hungary are cocktails and dancing. Before dinner or supper it is quite impossible to procure the most ordinary gin-and-something. Should your host go so far as to ask you whether you drink cocktails, be sure to say that you do. In return, you will be told, always in the most witty, and frequently in a charming, manner why cocktails are abominations. One good friend of mine, who, if witty, is never polite in my presence, told me when I asked him for gin and Italian that the only reason why I wanted a cocktail was that I was too lazy to carry on a conversation

without one; and that anyone who found it necessary to take stimulants before he felt competent to express an opinion about the weather would do much better to keep silent . . . Perhaps he was right! . . . In the summer evenings, after supper is over, country-house parties in Hungary settle down to play bridge. This is a pity! The evenings, not to mention the ladies, encountered in that country in summer are so lovely that one is conscious of the strongest feeling of futility at discussing for hours at a time the possibility of making four spades or six diamonds. Even bridge, though, when you least wish to play it, is interesting. For one thing the standard of play is remarkably high, and secondly you meet so many different nationalities in a country house that it is the most likely thing in the world for a foursome composed of Hungarian, English, German and American players to sit down at a table. Fortunately it is the fashion nowadays in Central Europe to speak English, and on this account people like myself, whose knowledge of Hungarian and German and American is extremely microscopic, are saved much trouble.

In general, one can say that when he is in the country the Hungarian Seigneur is as simple and natural a man as you could wish to find. In season, he is enthusiastic for his tennis, his partridges, and his pheasants. His wines, his courts and his birds he likes to have of the most perfect quality, but more for the sake of his guests than for his own pleasure I am quite certain. For your host in Hungary is famous for his hospitality and generosity.

I have only visited Hungary since the War, during a period when the country has been so hard hit that none but the most wealthy have been able to entertain at all extensively. But there was a time, if one may believe what one has heard and read, when hospitality was so liberal as to be almost embarrassing. Marriage festivals were—and to an extent still are—the occasions for displays of prodigal liberality. The best example of this was the marriage of Bishop Thurzó, which took place in Nagy-Bitse. The feasting in connection with the event lasted for precisely a year from the wedding day—ample time for a modern couple to be divorced and remarried—and I shudder to think of what it must have cost the worthy man to wine, dine, and dance the hundreds of his guests.

The country-gentry class, which to-day is remarkable almost entirely by reason of its absence, were great lovers of entertainment. For hundreds of years they lavished the greater part of their time and wealth on receiving and visiting their friends. Months at a time they would spend away from their estates, going through the country on apparently interminable rounds of country house visits. Should visitors ever prove so unnatural as to wish to return home and attend to their affairs, the simple expedients of removing the wheels from their carriages and of turning astray their horses were adopted to compel them to linger on. One direct result of so much social intercourse was that the various families intermarried considerably. To-day there is not much trace of such marriages in a greatly

depleted gentry class; but right through the country, wherever one goes, it is the most common thing to find that the people with whom one is staying are in some way related to those whom one has just left. In spite of all past liberality and present hardship, the aristocracy of Hungary continues to flourish; but the generosity of the less powerful gentry has recoiled on their own heads, resulting in the loss of their lands and houses, which have been bought up in many cases by the thrifty Jews.

In himself, as I have said, the Magyar aristocrat is charmingly simple. Yet, despite this fact, he manages to surround his entertainments with a courtly glamour and to place that glamour within the restricting bonds of an etiquette unexpectedly rigid. The explanation of this atmosphere of the court is traceable to Maria Theresa. After the great rally of 1741 of the Hungarian nobility to her cause, Maria Theresa swore that her heart was full of gratitude to the nation. This was true. The Queen did much for Hungary, and it is a tribute to her influence that the majority of the houses rebuilt after the Turkish evacuation of Hungary are in the style of her reign. But as well as being a grateful Queen, Maria Theresa was a fine diplomat. Where her predecessors of the Habsburg dynasty had failed to impress their will on the Hungarian nobility by force of arms, she was completely successful in accomplishing her object by making use of the attraction of her personal charm and of the glitter of the Viennese court. With their seduction to Vienna, the nobles of Hungary lost not only their

somewhat uncouth manners but also for a time their glorious fighting spirit, and it would have been bad indeed for the country had not Stephen Széchenyi in the nineteenth century, by guile as perfect as Maria's own, won back his estranged countrymen to an interest in their land. To-day, the nobles are passionate in their loyalty to Hungary, but a suggestion of the court of Vienna still clings to them with a peculiar charm.

A post-War movement in Hungary which has the support of the Seigneur in every village is the raising of boy-scout troops. When one reflects that, by the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary is allowed to keep an army of but 30,000 men, it is obvious that the scout movement can do much to further the growth of discipline, courage, and unselfishness which, in the ordinary course of events, would be developed during the period of military training. The aims and ideals of B.P. (as the Chief Scout is known throughout Hungary) are being taken to heart by the boys and youths not only of the villages but of the larger towns as well. Many of the scout-leaders are still at the universities or have just graduated, and these older members of the movement have gone into partnership with the various landowners for the purpose of giving a lead to the movement. Thus it happens that the Seigneur of a certain district, on being approached by a scout-leader, will suggest that the troops come and camp in his grounds, where he will see to it that they receive food supplies and like assistance towards the expense involved.

The scout movement is helping to foster discipline, courage, and unselfishness; and, even more important, the spirit of the Hungary of the Arpáds is being maintained by it. This spirit is over a thousand years old, and never so greatly as at the present time has it been necessary that it should stand up straight and strong, a staff on which Hungary, sickened and mutilated by Bolshevism and the effects of war, may lean while she recovers her strength. I remember hearing a certain Count M—telling this to a troop which was camping in his park.

We had been invited, the Count, an opera-singer who was staying in the house, and myself, to attend a campfire meeting. It was the most inspiring meeting at which I have ever been present. We walked from the house to the camp through a long avenue of Lombardy poplars and oaks. The poplars were slim and tapering, the oaks huge and spreading, with giant roots digging into the ground as if to steady their massive trunks. Stretching ahead of us, the avenue was like deep, black velvet; but overhead, through gaps in the leaves, the sky was radiant with peacock-feather green. A nightingale sang in the darkness to the left, and in a field on our right a Linden gave off a perfume which seemed like the essence of life. As we turned a corner at the end of the avenue, a cloud of sparks rose from the camp fire. We were greeted with a yell from the troops; then we sat in a circle about the fire, and the Count began to speak in a friendly, conversational voice.

He was clever, and struck at once the right note to hold his mainly youthful audience. Speaking reflectively, feeling again what he had already suffered, he told them of his experiences during the Bolshevist horrors which swept over Hungary in 1919: of his arrest and imprisonment, first in Győr, later in Budapest; of privations and starvation; of the betrayal and murder of many of his friends; of his escape and of days of hunted hiding; of the shame for his country's fall that had been in his heart; of the ultimate collapse of the Bolshevism, and of the magnificent fight which Hungary had made and was making to keep her balance in a world which had turned upside down . . .

The whole time he was talking his voice kept low; yet in it there was the power to hold still the circle; so that the fire sank lower and lower, and the shadows deepened on faces. When he had finished speaking of the Bolshevism there was deep silence for almost a full minute. But an extraordinary silence! such as enables one to hear sounds like the breathing of fireflies and trees . . . Then he continued, urging the scouts to be men; to remember their nationality, their tradition. He spoke of the Lost Provinces, which were taken, north and south, east and west, from Hungary after the War; and he spoke not bitterly but with a hope of some restoration in his voice . . .

Later, when the fire was blazing high once more, we sang together of the great days of Hungary, when John Hunyadi and his son, the Magnificent Corvin, were a scourge to the Turks, and the daring of the

Magyar horsemen was a byword in Europe. And later still the opera-singer, a Transylvanian with a magic voice, sang of the land from which he was exiled. A simple song he sang, a thing of few but passionate notes, with the sorrow of a lost people in its lingering words.

Sheer emotionalism, I know! Green sky; Youth; *Lindenbaum*; Campfire; Red Horrors; Moving Tunes! But there is this to be remembered, the Hungarians are an emotional race. Personally, I admire, and am grateful to, the Seigneur for having the enthusiasm to be bothered playing on emotions. That is his way of keeping his country alive. And it would be a sorry thing for the rest of Europe were Hungary to die.

CHAPTER VI

JÁK

HUNGARY is an amazing place. You can never be quite definite about Hungary, for you are never quite sure what is coming next. In the pre-Trianon days, when Hungary owned Transylvania, you could go practically to the Roumanian frontier of that province, there to find Saxon villages in plenty reminiscent of *Rothenburg-uber-Tauber*. That must have been gloriously surprising: to step out of the train at Brasov, say, in the shade of the magnificent Carpathians, and to find oneself in the midst of a small and beautiful Germany of which very nearly nobody knew. Then there were the oldest Magyars, the Székelys, who inhabited counties next door to the immigrant Saxons. These Székelys had a culture and a tradition and a charm which were indeed astounding. To-day Transylvania is Roumanian, and for that reason it has little place in a book on Hungary.

Transylvania is a long way from Szombathely, close on forty-eight hours' rail journey. The Romanesque church of Ják, some twenty kilometres distant by road, is much nearer, and in its own way as fascinating as anything to be found in Transylvania. On the way out to Ják, the country is totally different from the motionless, golden cornlands

which are the full fields of Hungary. The road for this short journey leads over small, humpy hills, through sudden thicknesses of forest, past nurseries of oak and acacia, by way of villages tinier than any to be seen throughout the whole of Hungary. With the exception of the stretches of forest, the country hereabouts is in miniature, as it would be from an aeroplane flying fairly low, or as it might have been had Hungarian-born Dürer drawn it. Dürer, as a matter of fact, supplies the right note. When you have emerged from a forest-shadowed strip of road and see to right and left of you gradual hillocks of indefinite colour, smallish pine and larch and birch trees spiralling rather vaguely about the slopes to the summits, yet with the whole scene in perfect proportion and in perfect pattern, you will think of a Dürer drawing. Which will be an excellent thought, for it will put you in the right frame of mind to appreciate the two grey-black towers of the church of Ják which are standing suddenly, superbly striking, perhaps ten kilometres still distant, on the horizon.

About the church of Ják there are many impressive notes, but the dominant is that struck by its twin towers. Everything combines to help them impress. You have emerged from dark, tree-shadowed road into Dürer country; and Dürer country has the effect of conjuring up visions of eternity. When you see those towers for the first time, before you have set eyes on the body of the church, you have strongly the impression that they are going on for ever and ever, within the limits of this world. Grey-black, standing high above trees

and scenery and hills environing them, the towers of Ják assert themselves to be made of stone, which has such a blessed sense of permanence.

I greatly like those towers and the impression they make of continuity. All the time in Hungary one has felt the notion of tradition. Here, in a pair of very lovely stone towers, is the symbolization of that notion. In them, the mysticism, the inborn sadness, the reserved strength of the nation stand out stark and compellingly alert.

The first time one sees those towers, one has a feeling of inevitableness. The atmosphere of the village, lying at the foot of the short steep hill on which stands the church, strengthens such a feeling. At the beginning of the village, to the right of the road, there is a shrine: rough white plaster over unevenly laid bricks; an up-slanting roof; on the inner walls a fresco, not so withered that it is impossible to marvel at its wonderful naïveté; within, a flower-burdened statue of Our Lady. The dust on the road is thick as sand on the seashore, and as your car navigates the village street it throws up great clouds of this dust on to the shimmering white walls and heavily thatched roofs of the houses. The sun is peculiar: perfectly round and compact, and not very shiny, but colossally strong. The sky blue as overripe cornflowers . . . Inevitableness? Yes! Eastern? Yes! . . . Yet when the road winds round the side of the short and steep hill, out of the sun and dust, and the car stops outside a rather battered Renaissance gate in the brick wall surrounding the churchyard, the East has faded out,

and you are left with an atmosphere which is purely Hungarian.

Although Ják was started to build in 1150, its history can be taken back the better part of two hundred years to the time in which the gigantic religious movement of Cluny began. I imagine that this movement, originating in a French monastery, did as much as any movement since Christ has done to pull the world together and set it on its feet again. King and Saint Stephen of Hungary was born of the time of Cluny; and Ják, built only after the death of Stephen, is yet a product of that great man's efforts. In order to grasp the full significance, thus the fullest beauty, of Ják, we must glance for a moment at what were Stephen's efforts. We know that this first, and probably greatest, King of Hungary was born at a time when the influence of Cluny was at its height; that influence could be taken to account for his becoming a Catholic. But what is not so generally realized is that Stephen, besides being a good man, was a great statesman, a profound observer. I do not think that it is too much to say that this first King of Hungary foresaw, broadly speaking, the twentieth century menace of Bolshevism. It is quite certain that he realized the inevitable danger to Hungary, and thus to the rest of Europe, of the Tartars and the Turks who, in turn, actually did attack, occupy, but never conquer, his country. Stephen was a pious man and a statesman: his alliance with Pope Sylvester of Rome was exactly what might have been expected of him. By this alliance, Stephen brought his nation to

Catholicism; in addition, he brought the resources of the Catholic religion to Hungary. Pope Sylvester was pleased with Stephen: among other privileges he granted him that which still belongs to the King of Hungary, the right of nominating his own bishops. Stephen made bishops and divided the spiritual authority over his kingdom among them. Throughout the land he built churches and fortresses, which should consolidate the new religion and the notion of the danger from the East in the hearts of the people. He was successful. The Hungarians embraced the Catholic faith with the same passionate zeal which they had hitherto devoted to paganism, and in time it came to them to feel that it was their duty to protect not only themselves but the rest of Europe as well against the dangers from the East. From the time of Stephen to the present, Hungary has suffered so many invasions and such widely distributed destruction from Mongol, Tartar, Turk and Trianon, that to-day, journeying through the length and breadth of this war-mangled kingdom, it is rarely indeed that one finds a building of an earlier age than Maria Theresan. It is partly its uniqueness, partly its tradition, partly its associations with Stephen, a blending of all three qualities that causes the village church of Ják to be an object so outstandingly striking.

As well, of course, there is the fact to be taken into consideration that the church is extremely lovely.

People (other than Hungarians) whose opinion

I respect, have told me that Ják is the finest piece of Romanesque architecture in Central Europe. Whether or no this is so I cannot say, for I have not seen every specimen of such architecture in Central Europe; moreover, I am not unduly clever about architecture. My own feeling is, that as a piece of architecture pure and simple, Ják is splendid but imperfect. You can walk right round the church, and everywhere you will find evidences of restoration. And, when you have finished your tour, two things will have impressed themselves on your mind: the first is the beauty of the form, the second that there is life in every line of the church. The marvel of the beauty of the church's form, which is not large, lies in the fact that it is in complete proportion and sympathy with the façade, which is distinctly dominating. For sheer richness of design, I do not think that I have seen anything superior to this façade, either in Germany or England. The exquisitely wrought stone arches, rising up from stone pillars arranged in groups of six, frame very deeply the finely carved oak doors, above which is a remarkably good piece of stone carving representing the three persons of God. Above the arches again are the apostles arranged on either side of Christ. As in almost all Hungarian carvings, the bodies of the figures are supremely well done; but the faces, equally typically, are naïve in the extreme. Lastly, on either side of the arches framing the doorway, there rise up from the ground, so superbly slender as to be incapable of destroying the small body of the church, the twin, dark, stone towers

which, at a distance of ten kilometres, caused you to thrill unexpectedly. At close quarters, it is not easy to look upwards at these towers: the sky is so brilliantly blue that, even if the sun be not in your eyes, the dazzle is painful. But if you stand some distance off you can see the towers at an angle. As often as not you will notice a giant stork standing quite motionless on each pinnacle.

Before going inside the church, it is worth while to visit the small, round chapel which stands, hidden by trees, at a little distance from the main doors. In this chapel, there is not a great deal which is beautiful, but on three panels of the ceiling there are paintings which tell in crude and vivid language the reason for Ják's having survived the period of the Turkish occupation of Western Hungary. Two of these panels are relics of the time when the church was used by the Turks as a mosque. The third was over-painted after the expulsion of the invaders, and shows God sending out from Heaven the most frightful flames of lightning with which the Christian Magyars are driving the Infidel horde from their country.

From an architectural point of view, the interior of the church is imperfect. The Turks used this place as a mosque, but, as in the case of the Coronation Church at Budapest, they took no care of it and allowed it to decay to such an extent that in parts restoration had to be drastic indeed in order that complete collapse might be averted. Thus most of the pillars and carvings to the right of the nave were renewed or built-up in the eighteenth century,

though in the dim light of the interior there is no apparent difference in the texture of the stone or in the quality of the carving. Still, if the pillars and the figuring to the left of the nave be carefully examined, they will be found to possess that hallmark of great age which is only to be described as hallowedness. People with whom I have visited Ják have remarked that the restored part of the nave was all wrong; that the men who did the work were not possessed of the spirit of the original time which conceived it. With these people I do not entirely agree. Technically, for self-confessedly I am not expert in this matter, they are probably quite right; but Ják, I always feel, is so much more than a mere piece of show architecture. Ják is one of the few remaining outward symbols of the inner spirit of the Hungarian nation—and I do not think that that inner spirit was so greatly different in the eighteenth century from what it was in the twelfth, or from what it is to-day in the twentieth.

On the inside walls of the church, to right and left of the doors, and behind the high altar, you can see the remains of the frescoes which originally adorned the whole of the interior. In most lights these remains can be seen as nothing more than faded, pinkish patches of colour; but occasionally, if there is a particularly brilliant sun shining through the rather dark windows, one is enabled to pick out odd lines, bits and pieces of figures. I was pleased when I discovered one day that these almost completely withered frescoes had at one time been vivid scenes of Saint George hunting and killing the

dragon. The notion of Saint George and the dragon is very Hungarian—you cannot drive far in the country without coming across a village bearing that saint's name. It may be obvious, it is certainly good, to think of the Hungarian nation in its struggles against, first the Tartar, later the Turk, and finally the Bolshevist menace as a Central European Saint George fighting against an Eastern dragon of exceeding (and, in the case of Bolshevism, generally uncomprehended) dreadfulness.

I feel ashamed and I feel glad to have written about Ják in the way I have. I feel that I have not done justice to its singular architectural beauty; yet I wonder who could do justice to something so lovely as this church. But, even while ashamed, I am glad! For in Ják there is so much of the essential Hungary; and if I have managed to give some slightest notion of the essence of that essential Hungary, then I feel that this chapter is of value to those who will see Ják at the outset of their seeing Hungary for the first time.

CHAPTER VII

TWO FRONTIER TOWNS

AS your train was drawing near to Szombathely, you may have noticed from the window on the left a range of tallish hills rising up, blue-grey, from the sweep of plain-country in which corn was growing. Those were the hills of Kőszeg, which take their name from the small town lying in the centre of the valley that they form at a point where Hungary and Austria meet. Either by train or by car, Kőszeg is easy to reach. Driving, the town is an hour and a half north-west of Szombathely by a road which traverses lovely and changing country. For some kilometres the way lies through cornlands, but soon great sweeps of this crop give way to smaller holdings of mixed growth. As the countryside begins to undulate, small peasant vineyards, beautifully regular in their cultivation, line the road. It is typical border country, with here a few flat fields of corn, there a series of irregular hillocks giving promise of the fine woodlands of Burgenland. As the undulations grow more pronounced, rising in places to steep hills, pine trees become numerous and thick, and a view unfolds on either side of the road.

The approach to Kőszeg is not unlike that to Graz or Salzburg, if you come to these places by

road from the east. There is the same upward curve of the road, the same feeling of anticipation as you see the town clustered below you. The environs of Graz and Salzburg are more magnificent than the neighbourhood of Kőszeg, but the country surrounding this Hungarian frontier town is more lovable than that which girdles the capitals of Styria and Salzburg. It is one of the most attractive of Hungary's qualities that one is able to feel at home with the scenery. Which is not to say that the country through which one passes is too *facile*—it is anything but that! But for all its diversity—and it has reminded me of such dissimilar places as India, New Zealand, and Scotland—there is about it something familiar, which comes to you from off a hilltop or out of a valley and says: "We know each other."

So, when you are at the peak of the hill on the further side of which is Kőszeg, you agree: "Yes, we know each other."

Kőszeg will always be famous in Hungarian history as the place which, in the sixteenth century, was responsible for an exhibition of heroism that not only saved Vienna from the possibly fatal effects of a siege at the hands of the all-conquering Turks, but which raised as well in the eyes of the Hungarian nation the reputation of the people. In the early years of the sixteenth century the condition of Hungary was not good. Under King Louis II the Magyar nobles had acquired so much power that civil war must have broken out in the kingdom had not the Turkish invasion concentrated attention

to a certain extent on outside affairs. The actual cause of this invasion was undoubtedly the overbearing conduct of the nobles. For when Solyman the Magnificent, who had succeeded Selim as Sultan of Turkey, sent an ambassador to King Louis to seek a prolongation of the peace between the two countries, the nobles who received the ambassador refused even to listen to what he had to say, but seized the wretched man and threw him into prison. There, by way of amusement, they cut off his nose and ears before returning him to his master. Solyman, furious, determined on an immediate invasion of Hungary. He gathered together an army of 300,000 men, with 300 cannon, and started out to avenge an insult as savage as it was uncalled for. The kingdom of Hungary, torn by internal strife, fell easily. Fortress after fortress was taken, till, finally, on August 29, 1526, the battle of Mohács, probably the most fateful in the nation's history, was fought, resulting in an overwhelmingly Turkish victory. After this battle, it was a matter of but twelve days before Budapest was in the hands of the Infidels.

In 1529, Solyman made his next move, an unsuccessful attack on Vienna. Three years later he made his second advance against that city. The progress of the Turkish Army was rapid indeed until its arrival at the Austrian frontier, by which time sixteen fortresses and fortified towns had fallen before the invaders. Solyman was certain that Köszege would prove an easy seventeenth victim. He was wrong.

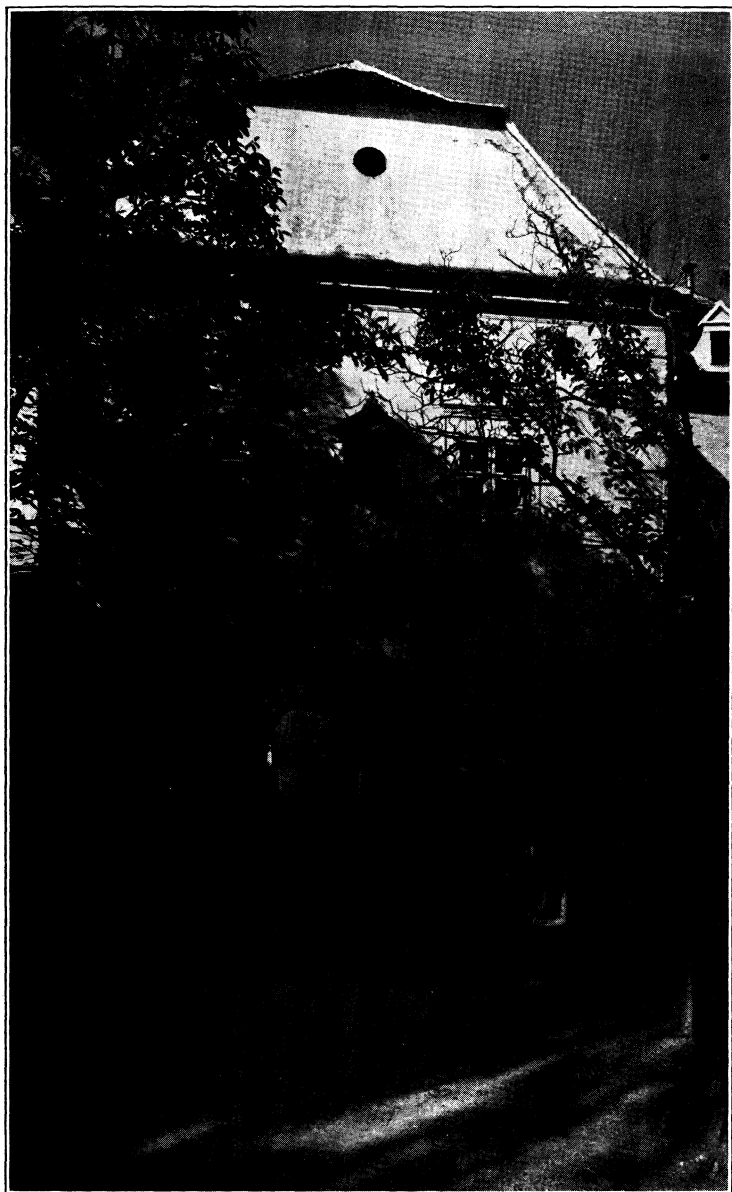


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

GATEWAY TO FORTRESS OF KÖSEG

To the commander of Köszeg, Michael Jurisics, Solyman sent a demand for surrender. The strength of the garrison was not great—twenty-eight hussars and ten cuirassiers in all—but the demand of Solyman was refused, and the small force swore to die before surrendering the fortress. Jurisics took immediate steps to strengthen the fortifications, purchasing with his own money gunpowder and provisions. On August 10 the siege was begun, and in a very short time the superior guns and mines of the Turks had blown a hole sixteen feet wide in the main wall of the citadel. Of the seven hundred defenders whom Jurisics had hastily recruited, three hundred and fifty were soon lying dead. Solyman, who had moments of mercy, then withdrew and sent a demand for surrender, which demand was promptly refused. On the twenty-fourth of August the Sultan sent to the commander of the garrison a fresh envoy, who was told to return to his master and say that, so long as he lived, Jurisics would not give up his fortress. By this time the garrison had but one hundredweight of gunpowder left, and the renewed assault which followed the rejection of the Sultan's terms accounted not only for much of this powder but for the lives of half the remaining defenders as well. Jurisics was severely wounded in the second onslaught, and the Turks were able to force a way into the town. Now the citizens played their part, attacking the invaders with such ferocity that for a while they were driven outside the town walls. But this triumph could not last. The commander was

wounded, the ammunition exhausted, the garrison reduced to a handful, and the food supplies gone. Jurisics saw the futility of further resistance, and, in order to save the remaining inhabitants from death, he allowed the Turkish flag to be hoisted over the town. The Sultan, seeing the flag, thought that he had taken Kőszeg, and retired from under the walls on August 31.

Solyman never reached Vienna. He had a great chance when he got so far as Kőszeg in 1532; but the glorious resistance of that town ruined his plans. Close on four weeks, during which priceless time the troops at Vienna had been enormously reinforced, and tremendous quantities of ammunition, men, and food supplies had been lost in the siege of Kőszeg. The Turkish Army was so weakened that it would have been useless to approach Vienna. By its resistance to overwhelming odds, Kőszeg set the seal on Hungary's right to call herself the Bulwark of the West against the Surge of the East.

To-day, anyone walking through the town would find difficulty in conjuring up an image of a tiny garrison and a handful of citizens delaying the vast horde of the Turkish Army. The fortress is more remarkable now as a well-preserved collection of beautifully mellowed bricks than as a citadel standing between an invading force and its desired goal. The moat, into which the bodies of Magyars and Turks tumbled from the walls of the fortress in those other days, is thickly overgrown with birch trees, whose fragile swaying branches droop in

places over the rust-red bricks. In the High Street, opposite the church of the Benedictines, sole memorial of the siege, is a house, in one wall of which is a carefully preserved hole where a Turkish cannon-bullet landed.

With the exception of that bullet-wound in the wall of a house, the atmosphere of Kőszeg is extraordinarily peaceful. Bruges, the most soothing town in Belgium, has the same effect on one. In Kőszeg, there is no canal such as slides through Bruges, nor is there a magnificent art collection, but in the Benedictine and Franciscan churches you can see paintings, statuary, and superbly worked church robes which are amazingly lovely. The fortress and the churches I have mentioned are all in the High Street, where stands as well the Town House, a fine specimen of Louis XVI architecture. The town gates at the end of this street have an amusing little history attached to them. In the middle of the last century the wife of the town commandant, whose house was situated next to the gates, complained that she was unable to see from her salon window the people who came to and went from the town. The gates, a lovely pair of things, were removed from the line of vision in consequence of the good lady's disability.

There is a street running parallel to the one of which I have just written that is as lovely as anything I have ever seen. In this street are some very good examples of the arched and carved wooden doorways, leading on to carriage drives, that are becoming increasingly rare in Hungary. You are

strolling along this street, admiring the design of the doors, when you come quite suddenly to a driveway whose doors are thrown back. The drive stretches away before you, steeply walled on either side by bricks washed white and glistening in the sun. Only an extremely narrow strip of deep blue sky can be seen overhead, and what little of this blue there is does not clash with the rich scarlet cannae growing on three sides of the cobbled courtyard at the end of the drive. On the fourth side of the square is a house—the home of some fairly unimportant member of the official class. In front of the door of this house two or three of the prettiest small children in the whole of Hungary are playing. Why the children of Köszeg should be so lovely as they are I do not know. I can only say that their eyes, hair, skin, lips, and teeth have a fineness of texture and colouring that one sees nowhere else in the country.

Sopron, the second border town to be visited, is sixty kilometres north of Szombathely by road or rail. Contrary to what one would expect, owing to its proximity to the Austrian capital, Sopron has always been decidedly Magyar in character. I do not propose to discuss in this chapter the ethics of the handing over to Austria after the last war of a portion of Hungary, her ally; my statement concerning the national sentiments of the inhabitants of Sopron will be justified when I point out that that town—the only one on the revised borderline between the two countries which was given the chance—voted solidly, when a plebiscite was taken, for remaining Hungarian.

Architecturally, Sopron is pleasing. The narrow streets of the old town, and the closely packed, sloping buildings which increase that narrowness, have an air of antiquity about them. This is not to be wondered at, for the town dates, as a Hungarian possession, from the twelfth century; and long before that a Roman colony, Scarabantia, flourished there. Moreover, the Turks, who ruined so much that was lovely in Hungary, never touched Sopron; for which relief one is very grateful. The most attractive thing in Sopron is the Frans Josef Square, where, among others, is the still beautiful house of King Matthias Corvinus. This residence of the Magnificent Corvin, originally a fine piece of Renaissance work, but restored in the time and in the style of Maria Theresa, typifies the Hungarians' method of restoration. They will not be faithful to a period, but must go on adding bits and scraps until the original beauty of a building is successfully hidden, if not destroyed. In the Frans Josef Square there is variety of architecture. To the right of Matthias' house are a number of lovely *Louis seize* buildings, while the church in the centre of the square is good Gothic. The building, though, which I like best is the inn, a low, whitewashed affair of arched windows, with a broad, sloping roof of weathered tiles. This fine example of the architecture of the country must be visited, for it is stocked with some exceedingly good white wines.

The town of Sopron is charming, but the two features for which it should be noteworthy—features

unknown, strangely enough, to many Hungarians living in the district—are to be found a few kilometres north of it. The first of these is the stone quarry of Sopron, the second the Grotto of Mithras. Both of these places are approached by the same badly formed track which diverges from the excellent main road some ten kilometres after it has left the town. As the car bumps its way over the rising track on the final stage of the journey, one has an extraordinary sense of having come to the end of the world. The horizon is immediately in front, and the crops growing in the chalky, parched earth to right and left give the impression of things that have died but not completely withered away. At the top of the hill the car turns right, then again half-right, and descends a smooth, fairly broad roadway into the depths of the quarry. After winding downwards for a hundred and fifty feet this roadway ends in a superb natural square, having a sheer fall of a hundred feet to the left to the deepest part of the quarry. Straight ahead of where the car has stopped, a series of finely proportioned caves open off from the square, while to the right is a wide sweep of level ground.

In the eighteenth century the quarry was much used by Viennese builders, but I doubt if any of them ever conceived an interior to compare, in line, proportion and strength, with the series of rooms which the workmen, in the ordinary course of their labours, shaped from this great limestone pit. Look, for example, at this room. It is tall, not very deep or broad, but in exact proportion. Into it there

is no doorway at which liveried footmen would stand and bow; simply, you take a step and are away from the other caves, where shafts of sunlight turn white walls and columns to gold, in a room where any tremendous happening from the birth of our Lord to His burial had been appropriate. On the walls of this room is a soft, cool, green tapestry: moss. I never thought to ask whence came the stone to build the palace at Szombathely, but I imagine it was from Sopron. Which would be a good thing indeed, for the palace has great beauty, which at rare moments is akin to that of the quarry.

Half-way between the quarry and the Grotto of Mithras, a distance of one and a half kilometres from either point, one sees that broad stretch of water, Lake Fertö. I have been told that there is excellent duck-shooting to be had in the shallow, reed-stocked waters of the lake, but I believe that this inland sea is dead, devoid at least of any life other than a variety of the serpent which helped kill the Mithraic bull. Anyone passing the lake on a hot and rather breathless and very typical Hungarian summer day should stop the car for a few moments. Only a very short while will be required to convince the watcher that it is unnecessary to go to the Hungarian Lowland in order to see mirages. After gazing at the motionless, grey-blue surface of Fertö for a few moments, a nebulous heat-haze will be noticed hovering over the lake, and from out of that haze floats a very creditable imitation of the melancholy Delibab.

If the treaty-makers of Trianon were considerate in nothing else, they did at least arrange the post-War Hungaro-Austrian frontier in such a manner as to leave Sopron's Mithraic temple in neutral territory. There is no need for alarm when armed guards are encountered on the Hungarian side of the frontier: they will not demand to see the passport you have left behind, if you explain to them that you wish merely to see that fairly small, subterranean cave which is hidden away in the depths of the jungular undergrowth to the left of the road which traverses No Man's Land. The grotto is in a marvellous state of repair, considering that it is fifteen hundred years since last it was used as a place of worship by adherents of the cult. The most interesting thing in this small, dimly lit place is the bas-relief cut from that wall which faces the finely shaped entrance. In this relief, in excellent detail, can be seen the strangely born Life-god, Mithras, a young man, clinging with one hand to the sacred bull which he has been ordered by the Sun to slay, while in the other hand is the weapon which has inflicted the death wound. The scorpion is there, attacking the genitals of the bull; and as well, the serpent drinking its blood and the dog flying at the wound in the animal's side can be distinguished. The Sun-god and his messenger, the raven, which are seen in some of the Mithraic sculptures, are not visible in this particular one. Whether these two figures have become obliterated by time, or whether they were never there, I am unable to say. Information as to the history of the grotto at Sopron is hard

indeed to acquire; but it is certain that Roman legionaries, stationed at Scarabantia, were responsible for the introduction of the cult to this distant province of the former Roman Empire.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INLAND SEA AND A BENEDICTINE MARVEL

LAKE BALATON, Hungary's great inland sea, is rather more than a hundred and fifty kilometres north-east of Szombathely on one of the main roads to Budapest. If you wish to have a particularly good first impression of the lake, you should do as I did on my first visit there: get up at half-past four and go by road, arriving at the attractive town of Balatonfüred in time for breakfast some three hours later. Between five and six in the morning in Hungary it is extraordinarily cold. A mist rises from the ground and creeps into the bones, causing one to fear pneumonia and to curse the local climate. But it is worth going on for the pleasure to be derived from eating a hot breakfast on the shores of this gloriously beautiful stretch of water.

After traversing the county of Vas, the road lies straight across Zala *megye*, perhaps the loveliest of the twenty-five counties comprising post-War Hungary, and passes through the town of Keszthely situated at the most westerly corner of the lake. For half an hour before arriving at Keszthely, while the car was still skirting the foothills of the Bakony chain, the atmosphere has been growing steadily warmer; and, after leaving that town, on entering

the lake district proper, the heat is as astounding as it is gratifying. I have spent many days at Balaton, and the peculiar power there of the sun has never ceased to delight me.

From Keszthely, the road runs parallel to the northern shore of the lake for more than half of its total length of a hundred and four kilometres, separated from the water by a narrow strip of brilliantly green lowland.

The scene is good. . . . To the right of the perfectly even road along which one is travelling, the lake, a not very broad strip of azure-blue, velvet-still water, stretches infinitely further eastward than the eye can follow. Lining the southern shore for the whole of its visible length are thick pine woods, black rather than green from this side, beyond which, on the horizon, are the tips of a range of hard, purplish hills. The yellow-gold rays of the sun, which splash the smooth surface of the water, give to the reeds fringing the northern shore a lightness of colouring that is usually found only in early spring growth.

To the left of the road the dominant colours are green and red. Every conceivable shade of green—copper green, olive green, pale and dark jade greens, an occasional splash of emerald—and very nearly every sort of crop: clinging grape vines that have been sprayed with some insect-destroying mixture, broad canna leaves, turnip and beet tops, a catch crop of oats, small squares of ripening hay-grass, smaller beds of ripening Paprika, all grow with tremendous energy in the dull red, volcanic

soil that is drenched in the sun's colossal heat. The road itself, so broad and perfect with its dressing of reddish gravel, stretches before one in a prolonged curve, on which a faint, smoky heat-haze dances. The lake is a vivid reflection of the motionless blue sky, so vivid that it is a relief to turn one's eyes towards an approaching field of pale white poppies.

After driving by the side of the lake for an hour, one comes to the broad peninsula of Tihany, on the highest point of which stands the Benedictine monastery in which the late Emperor Karl and the Empress Zita spent some days as political prisoners following the disastrous failure of the second attempt to regain the Hungarian throne. Never have I seen anything so horribly pathetic as the two small rooms in which the last ruling Habsburgs found their final lodging in Hungary. The furnishings are a mixture of baroque and Victorian, a combination of richness and solidity depressing in the extreme. Here (if one had been a king) it must have been easy indeed to realize that one's throne was a thing of the past. I do not know how strict was the confinement of the Emperor and his wife, but, looking from the narrow window of the sitting-room, over this narrowest and most perfect strip of the lake, at the woodlands across the water, and at the exquisite curve of the bay between Tihany and Balatonfüred, it is not difficult to imagine that so much freedom as they were allowed can only have produced a proportionate longing for complete liberty to roam at will through such lovely country.

Balatonfüred, the largest of the numerous towns bordering the lake, and the centre of the two important industries of viticulture and fishing, is twenty minutes' drive from Tihany along the shore road. The wines of Balaton, made from the grapes which grow so abundantly in the volcanic soil on the northern side of the water, have only to be tasted to be appreciated; which is more than can be said for the *fogas* which are taken in large quantities from the lake. I am quite prepared to believe that the *fogas*, which is a cross between perch and pike, would be capable of giving excellent sport on light tackle; but I do not agree with those Hungarians who claim this to be the finest of all fish to eat. For one thing, there are too many bones in it, and, even when cooked by an expert chef, the flesh is distinctly coarse. Originally, the fishing of the lake was in the hands of the local peasants, who sailed in boats hollowed from tree-trunks and did their business with nets and harpoons. Now the industry is owned by a company which, while organizing it most efficiently, has completely banished the angler.

In summer, Balatonfüred is delightful. The first time that I went there I arrived early on a July morning, thinking to go on to Budapest before noon. Actually I did not continue my journey till ten days later, by which time I had fallen completely in love with the place. From the pier at Füred one can take steamer and sail right round the lake. If you enjoy cruising through motionless blue waters, it is worth making this trip, which is even more to be recommended if you are thrilled, as I am, at arriv-

ing back after a day's sail to a harbour where square, whitewashed villas and avenues of broad chestnut trees stand down to the edge of the water. But you should be certain of your seaworthiness before undertaking a cruise on Balaton; for strong gusts of wind spring up very suddenly, turning the tropical calm of the water into a fiendishly good imitation of the Channel on a bad day. As an antidote to any unpleasantness which may arise at sea, the alkali mineral springs and carbonic acid baths of the town are highly efficacious. The bathing at Füred is wonderful. The water is warm—temperature posted daily in the hotels—and regulations as to the amount of body which may be exposed to the rays of the sun are delightfully negligible. Next door to the bathing-place is the anchorage of the Balaton Yacht Club, the smartest sailing club in the country.

Apart from being the centre of the Balaton wine and fishing industries, Füred's main *raison d'être* is its attractiveness as a holiday resort. For the weekends between May and September, the place is full of people from Budapest and the other towns. Among the Hungarians themselves the lake is deservedly popular; but so far little or no effort has been made to realize its enormous potentialities as an internationally popular *plage*. Which is a great pity! To-day Hungary is the poorest country in Europe; yet here is a place capable of attracting thousands of visitors annually, and nothing is done to put it into commission.

It is not only in summer, indeed, that the Balaton would attract visitors. In winter the lake freezes

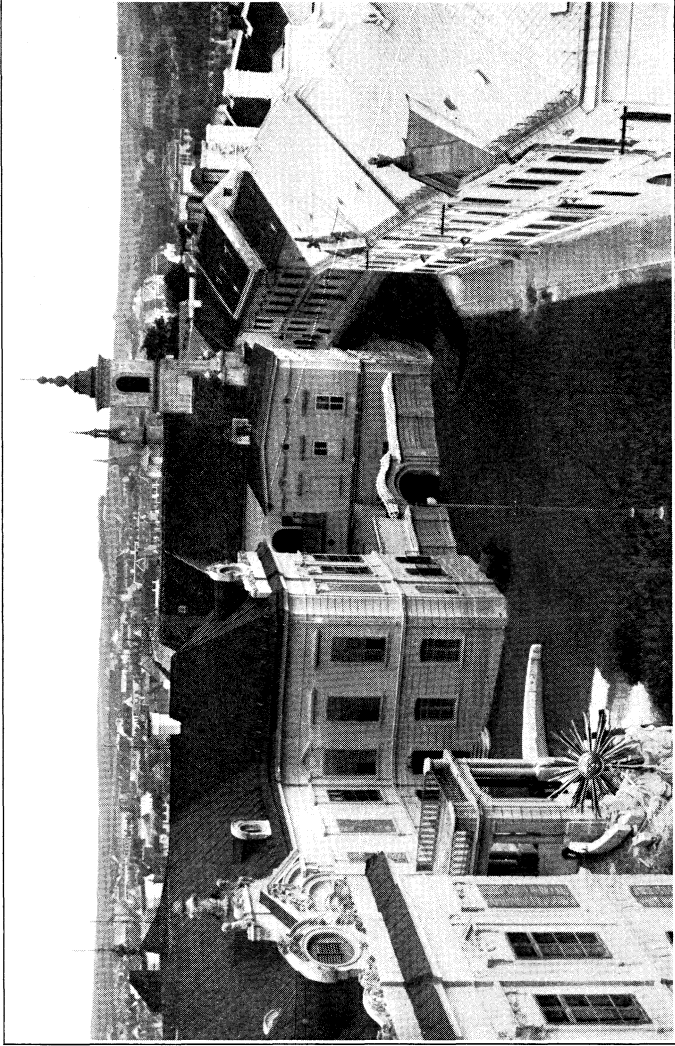


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

VESZPRÉM: BISHOP'S PALACE
Not mentioned in Text

to such an extent that carriages can cross its surface in perfect safety. On the surface of the lake there are stretches of several miles extent admirably suited for skating, while the warm wind which blows from the surrounding hills makes ice-boat sailing comfortable as well as exciting. The Hungarians should look to the possibilities of Lake Balaton, and do so immediately; if they do not, they will find some enterprising foreigner stepping in and coining the money which is merely waiting to be made.

Fifty kilometres due north from Balatonfüred, on the centre one of three tall peaks of the Badacsony range of hills, is the Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma, which towers over the tiny village of Györszentmárton, where St. Martin of Tours is said to have been born. The surrounding country is an utterly flat plain, which makes it possible for the abbey, perched on its hill-top, to be seen from a great distance. From twenty kilometres away the place is superb, a huge pile of white buildings, flanked by towers and having the air of a fortress, which stands out against the hilly background, a symbol of the might of Christianity, and a fine memorial to the man—King Stephen—who established it in Hungary. Actually, the foundations of the abbey date back to the time of Duke Geyza, Stephen's father; but it was Hungary's first King who conceived the notion of Pannonhalma as one of a chain of fortified monasteries which should, both by prayer and, if necessary, force of arms, defend Europe from the menace of the East. The first Abbot of Pannonhalma was Astrik, Stephen's friend

and envoy to Pope Sylvester, from whose hands he received the Holy Crown of Hungary. Saint Gellért, who was martyred in Buda, was one of the monks of this place.

Hungary's second royal saint, Imre, son of Stephen, whose anniversary is celebrated every year in Budapest with such amazing splendour, is also identified with Pannonhalma. Once when he was visiting the monastery, Stephen took with him his son, then aged seven. As the procession climbed slowly up the steep, winding roadway leading to the monastery, the monks came forth to meet their sovereign. The sight was a good one—the gold and silver trappings of the horses, the arms of the body-guard flashing in the sun, and the flags and banners of the monks streaming behind them as they advanced downhill to give welcome. While on the hilltop, dominating the scene, stood the church, then by far the grandest of the buildings. Imre, irritated by the slowness with which the two cavalcades approached one another, left his father's side and ran towards the monks. Following him, Stephen saw that he kissed some of the monks only once, others of them two or three times, while one Benedictine, Maurice, he kissed seven times. Anxious to discover the reason for these preferences, Stephen questioned his son, who told him that he had been instructed by God to give so many kisses to each of the monks as they bore signs of piety and devotion! To-day, the magnificently hedged drive which winds round the side of the hill to the broad carriage square of the monastery is called Szent

Imre Űt, in honour of Hungary's most romantic saint.

The abbey church is a good, but much restored, piece of Romanesque architecture. The main part of it was built in the thirteenth century, but portions of the crypt are even older. The crypt contains the throne and the cloak of King Stephen, and miraculous cures are said to have been worked on people who have sat on the throne. The sacristy, an eighteenth-century addition, magnificently panelled with gold and wood carvings, contains chalices and vestments that are wellnigh priceless.

As it now stands, the monastery is a modern building, having been almost completely rebuilt in the early nineteenth century. By far the finest apartment in the place is the refectory, which is rococo. The floor and the simple furnishings of this long and broad room are of oak, and the walls and ceiling are decorated with stucco-work and frescoes. The painting which I liked best was a scene from the life of Saint Benedict in which we are shown the Saint removing from his wine glass a number of fiery serpents. The story is that Benedict, at that time a very young Abbot, had made himself unpopular owing to the rigour of his rule of life. On this account, his monks conspired to murder him by placing poison in his wine. Benedict, warned by God of his danger, picks up the glass containing the deadly drink and turns the poison into serpents, which, without being fanged, he removes. The look of consternation on the faces of the conspirators, as the holy Abbot points out their folly, is superb, and

leads one to imagine that whoever it was—I could not discover his name—who made the paintings must have had an appreciation both of wine and of its possible effects on the drinker.

Should anyone visiting Pannonhalma be fortunate enough to secure an invitation to inspect the 200,000 litres of wine stored in the monastic caves, he ought certainly to accept. The bursar, who conducts one on such a tour, is a most charming man who might well have emerged for the occasion from some not too expurgated pages of Rabelais. When the tour is over, the visitor may be inclined to agree that there are serpents in all wine, but while he is actually moving from one huge barrel to another, being offered a sip from each, he will be quite certain that heaven is not up in the sky, as formerly he had imagined, but that rather it is in the depths of a Hungarian wine cave, where drops of cool moisture stand out on the walls, and where the sands of time are spread over the cool stone floor.

The library at Pannonhalma is a magnificently proportioned Empire room, around the walls of which are arranged the 200,000 volumes that go to make this the finest private collection in Hungary. Various smaller rooms opening off from it contain collections of coins, porcelain, and weapons. Among the porcelain are some exquisite pieces of Herend. But the library, like the church, the refectory and even the wine caves, is only one of the individual units that go to make up the whole great notion of perfecting for which Pannonhalma—or for that matter any Benedictine monastery throughout the

world—stands. From the windows of this library, there is a view which does more than all the books in it to stress the notion of this perfecting aim. From these windows, one sees the flat country stretching in all directions from the foot of the hill on which stands the monastery. On all sides this country is in a high state of cultivation, very different from the bog-infested waste that it was when a handful of Benedictine monks first received the charter to it from King Stephen. Effort went into the draining of that bogland, and effort unimaginable was needed to haul each separate stone which went to build the cool church we now admire up the steep slope of St. Imre's Hill. Effort and effort and effort, for the draining of swamps, the civilizing of a people, the constructing of towns and villages, for the continuance of effort.

King Stephen was a wise man, who realized very well that effort, and continued effort, would be needed if Hungary were to attain to and keep her allotted place as a Christian nation at the end of Europe. Pannonhalma is a memorial both to the wisdom of the King and the greatness of the men in whom he placed his trust.

From Pannonhalma to Győr is a short journey, the only reason for making which that I know of is that Győr, the second largest, and quite the least attractive, town in Hungary, is the junction either by road or by rail for Budapest. Before the War, this town, on account of its large railway shops, was one of the wealthiest in Hungary. Then came the Bolshevism, during which it was a Red centre; and

later still the Roumanians, an even greater trial to Hungary than the Bolsheviks, stole much of its vitally needed plant and machinery. To-day, Győr—and in this respect it is fortunately unique in Hungary—has the air of a dog that has been unfairly and unmercifully beaten and has not yet made up its mind whether to trust men again. This is a pity, for the place has a not inglorious history. Arpád fought there, and there also Nicholas Pálffy gained a great Hungarian victory over the Turks. Napoleon twice fought at Győr and for a time it was occupied by the French. But, unkind though it be to say so, my most pleasant recollection of the town is leaving it on board one of the great international expresses that stop *en route* for Budapest, two hours distant.

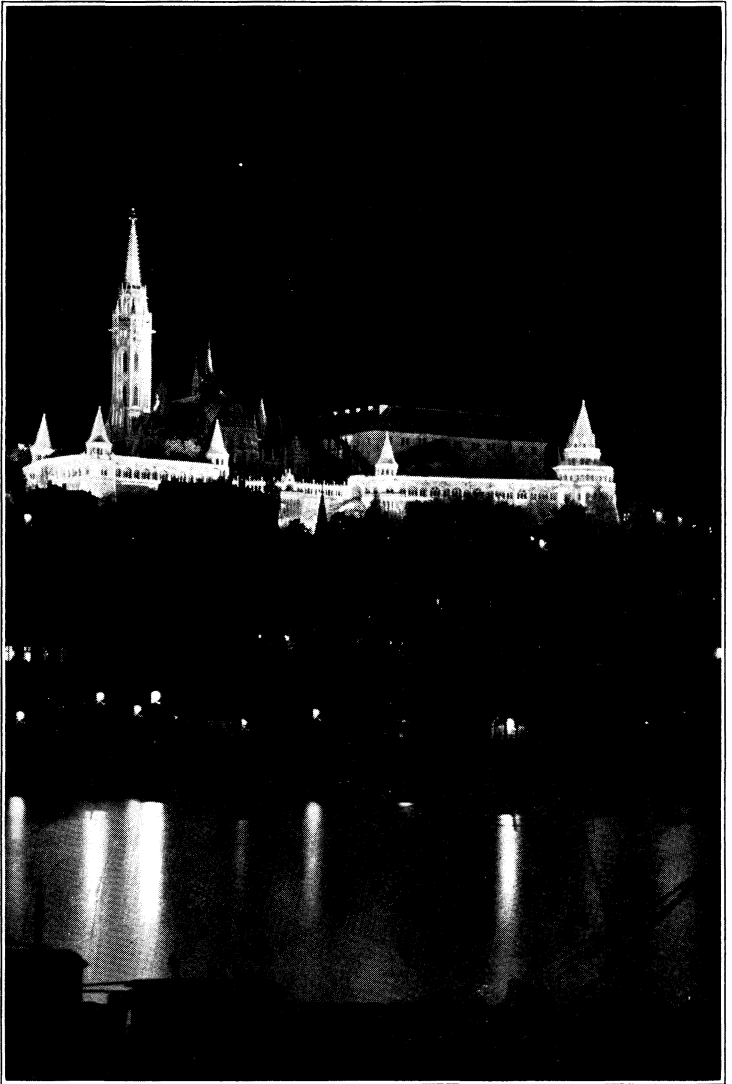


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

BUDA BY NIGHT FROM THE PEST RIVERBANK

CHAPTER IX

THE CITY OF WONDERFUL NIGHT

UNDOUBTEDLY the best time to arrive in Budapest is after nightfall. I say so advisedly; for the city is exquisitely beautiful by night, and lovely enough by the next day's light not to let down an overnight impression of having arrived in the capital of fairyland.

Ten minutes before arrival at the Keleti (Central) station, you will suddenly realize that the train is travelling at a tremendous pace, and the usual wonder as to whether it is out of control comes into your head. This maniacal burst of speed is too much. You lower the window, disregarding the warning notices that it is *dangereux à se pencher en dehors*, and that *e pericoloso sporgersi*, and away in front of you is the long row of lights which pilots the Danube through Budapest. They are not ordinary lights, you instantly realize, and your heart beats strangely at the sight of them. They are so mysterious, more like the gleam of outer harbour lights, seen from a long way out on a tropic-calm sea, than the blaze one expects at the approach to a great metropolis. There is something wrong about the speed of the train racing headlong over richly interlocking points towards that steady, brilliant line of illumination, which should be drawn near to (you

feel) in the slow, smooth manner of an oil-fuelled ship gliding into port by night.

You are nearer to this line of lights by now, and the stars, which were in the sky a few moments ago, have tumbled down, much lower, and are scattered over the hills of Buda, on the right bank of the river, which have swung into view round a corner. What a sight! Pale-gold light everywhere. The river lights extending in a long, unwavering line from west to east on the Pest bank, regularly spaced and increasingly large slashes of gold. The hills of Buda a network of spiralling, overgrown glow-worms. No opportunity to pick out individual buildings or the contours of hills—the train is going too fast for that, your eyes are too bewildered.

There comes a diversion. With creaking joints, the train swings round a sharp curve, which blots out for a moment the millions of lamps. There is a hollow, prolonged roar, and below your window, through the gaps in the steel railing of the bridge, is an immensely broad swathe of gold-embroidered, black velvet. You are crossing the Danube.

You have crossed it. Comes another curve in the line. New lights are shut out by something large and spreadingly dark. The engine screams and spits lungful of red flame and whitish smoke. Speed slackens. Interlocking rails gossip under fumbling bogey wheels. Porters and a fresh horde of lights loom up. You have arrived.

There are scores of excellent hotels in Budapest, but only five which overlook the Danube. Of these, four are in Pest on the Ferencz Josef Rakpart (Franz

Josef Embankment); and the fifth, the huge Gellért Hotel, standing in the shadow of the rock of that name, is on the Buda side of the river. After sampling each member of the Big Five, I am prejudiced in favour of the Dunapalota (Danube Palace) on account of the splendour and number of its bathrooms, and the delightful, secluded, outdoor grill. In the days when it was the headquarters of the Bolshevist chiefs, the Dunapalota was still known as the Ritz; but after the fall of the Reds, in October 1919, the hotel, influenced by the intense spirit of patriotism which swept through Hungary, adopted its present name. In fairness to the management, I would add that absolutely no trace remains of the Jewish-Soviet occupation!

To get to the Dunapalota—or the Hungaria, Bristol, and Carlton, which are its immediate neighbours—one drives down Rákoczy Út and through Kossuth Lajos Utca, two of the most fascinating thoroughfares in Budapest. *Út*, pronounced oot, means a broad street (like Oxford Street); while *Utca* is a narrower, though not necessarily less important, street. In the course of the drive along these two thoroughfares one passes, metaphorically speaking of course, through bits and pieces of Calcutta, New York, and London. Going along Rákoczy Út, you will see the same frenzied manipulation of motors and taxis that may have caused you to shudder as you were being conveyed from one point to another in the crowded capital of Bengal. Streams of liquid light—red, green, blue, and yellow light, advertising Greta Garbo, Ford cars, Phillips

Radios, and Hunyadi János aperient water—are reminiscent of New York. London is represented by the policemen, wearing tall, silvery helmets, who control the thick streams of traffic and pedestrians with such superb skill that there is never a collision. Kossuth Lajos Utca, narrower than Rákoczy Út, intensifies the riot of colour and movement into a tightly wedged throng, by comparison with which any of London's theatre streets of an evening is a great, open space. In this street are the automatic eatshops at which vividly lovely Hungarian women and dark-eyed Hungarian men exchange *pengös* for Paprika-sandwiches, fish-salads, and glasses of rich, ruby wine. Here are long rows of ultra-futuristically stream-lined omnibuses and even longer rows of small, clanging, worn-out tram-cars. Here are old and lined women, who press against one another as they scramble their way into the gilded warmth of a Maria Theresan baroque church. Here is the advance guard of Budapest's huge army of beggars, selling more rubbish, and having more dreadful distortions than you have ever before seen. Here, too, above all, is noise: the curses of taxi-drivers, impatient, like your own, to move on; the screech of an electric drill; the drone from the thousands who cram the pavements; the splutter from countless exhausts; the clang of the trams; the slither and clop-clop of huge horses suddenly reined against the boards of their drays. If you like noise, you realize that this is the street in which to find it. But the traffic block breaks up, and you move on. . . .

I have suggested the Dunapalota as a *pied-à-terre* because of its bathrooms. You should dine at the Hungaria on your first night for the sake of the view to be had from the terrace. By the time that you sit down to dinner, it will be between ten and eleven. But that is nothing! In Budapest, no one ever dines earlier than nine, and if you mention food to a waiter before then he will think that you are quite mad.

The scene from the terrace is beautiful. You are facing the river, which is darkness much intruded on by glow-worms and diamonds. Across the river is Buda. The background of Buda is a pattern of lights, going up and up, round and round, a spiral of pale gold. Nearer to the river, on the lower slopes, there are patches of darkness where a palace is untenanted. The largest of these patches is the Royal palace, which you can look at in the daytime, but which is now invisible, save for a very dim, greenish tinge which creeps about a huge, copper dome. Still lower, on the embankment, there is again more light, sufficient of it to draw into outline the base of the jutting Gellért Hill, rocky as the coast of hell. A certain foreign diplomat on a visit to Budapest remarked in tones of disapproval that he had not expected to find such rocks in a civilized city. Which remark, apart from being undiplomatic, was unappreciative. The whole charm of a city such as Budapest is that, in the midst of a cosmopolitan civilization, you do find such an uncivilized thing as a rock colossal in its suggestion of force.

The Ferencz Josef Rakpart, on to which the

terrace of the Hungaria abuts, is the most popular evening promenade in Budapest. This embankment is broad and flat and forbidden to vehicular traffic. On such a summer evening as I write of, the chestnut trees lining the walk are in flower, and the air, after a day of tremendous heat, is gloriously fresh. The people are out in their thousands. They stroll up and down, amazingly, *en bloc*, attractive. One of the most delightful sensations in the world is to watch a crowd in Budapest. They may be being touched by a particularly moving piece of music, they may be quarrelling, they may be doing any one of the things which we in England also do. But they do it with a difference, with enthusiasm.

Among the crowd which throngs the *rakpart* there is always a large number of rounded, immaculately dressed, ultra-clean shaven (yet with a little the appearance of having shaved twenty-four hours ago) wealthy-looking men. Jews! With them walk short, sometimes thick, always richly dressed, black-eyed, red-lipped, curved-nosed women. Jewesses! If you happen to be dining with a Hungarian (and there is a strongly felt difference between a Hungarian and a Hungarian Jew), it is certain that he will remark: "God! How dreadful!"

"What?" you inquire. "I think she," or the fish, or whatever it is you are thinking about, "is very agreeable."

"Jews," your Hungarian explains. "Millions of them. Everywhere. Got everything. Disgusting!"

And if you look about you on the hotel terrace, you will agree. The people at whose tables are

buckets with champagne bottles resting in the middle of the ice are Jews. The people to whom the head waiter is terribly obsequious are Jews. The people who drive up to the front entrance of the hotel in sleek automobiles which look like immense, emasculated cats are Jews. The people with too much stomach and too many chins are Jews. In Budapest, it is perfectly correct to say that the people who are unpleasant to look at or speak to are Jews. As well, though, a great many of the really delightful people are Jews, to whom, in their homes, I propose to introduce you in a later chapter.

But now, let us drop Jews and go for a walk. There is such a crowd on the embankment that it is easier to go down some shallow stone steps and be alone on the quays. Not the glare of lights here, but a swift, intermittently flashing, noiseless world of movement. The river is large, very broad. It goes along fast, silent. You feel that it is fathomlessly deep. It is dark, velvety, slashed at the sides with arches of pale gold.

A small boat without porthole illuminations draws level with you. It shows but three lights; yellow in the bows, red amidships, blue at the stern. It travels very fast with the river, heading downstream. On the Buda side, trams run along the embankment, tiny things with golden windows, and purple sparks darting out from above them, where the contact pole touches a joint in the overhead wires. The Gellért Hill comes into view. It is not sharply defined, but is darkish, towering, in the way that an unknown island in the middle of the ocean

is towering when you see it close to from a cabin porthole just as night is coming on.

People sleep on the mile-long line of steps leading down to the river. Old men and old women who have nowhere else to rest. Eventually, some of them will climb up on to a railing of one of the five beautiful bridges spanning the Danube and allow themselves to crash down to the river. They will do it one night when the moon is well up in the sky. They love the Danube, these people who sleep by its side. On an average, the body of one of them is taken from the river for each day of the year.

Up above on the Embankment the crowd is tightly wedged. The Jewmen with the powder on their faces pinch the soft flesh of the Jewesses in the rich dresses. The Hungarians dining on the terrace tell themselves that it is disgusting—these Jews!—and order something more to drink. Someone in a hotel has already become a little drunk, and has given champagne to the leader of the Tsigany band. The champagne does its work, and the notes of the violin are deeper and higher, more passionate and more plaintive. The music floats out of doors, down the long line of steps, into your head.

“What cabarets are there?” you ask the taxi-man.

He goes through the list: Moulin Rouge (the name is inevitable); The New York (equally so); Old Admiral (quite amusing); The Parrot (full of them); Tabarin, and so on. Most of these are in the Erzsébet Körut, meaning Elizabeth Ringstrasse. Here, all the lights in Pest seem to join hands and go

mad in a riot of liquid gold, green, blue, orange, and purple signs. The cinemas are packed, the bars and cabarets far from empty. The women are very lovely, with dark eyes, strangely smooth, olive skins, and rounded foreheads. And the men are infinitely better dressed than those of Vienna or Paris. Everyone seems to ride in the funny little red two-seater taxis; and, at the same time, there is but standing room in the trams and buses. Budapest has a superficial air of being overburdened with wealth! Certainly not of being what it is, the most hard-up city in Europe!

The bars are made attractive, as are the coffee-houses, by the Tsigany bands. When you go in, the leader, seeing that you are a foreigner, will immediately play quite well, "Walking with Soosie", or something of the sort. Send him a message to stop and be natural. It will cost you a few *pengös* to do so, for the leader, on receiving your note, will immediately come to your table and play "at" you. He plays remarkably well, and looks extremely handsome with his pointed features and dark colouring. The music now is really Hungarian, geographically so. The uprearing, mountainous, needle-leaved slopes of lost Transylvania; the tropic-heavy waves of emotion of the Great Plain; the sure, effortless rapidity of the Danube, all are in the tunes which shout and sigh and glide through a multiplicity of dissimilar, yet concordantly urgent, phrases. Some of the men who are present weep (before shouting for more wine), and the women fall in love with the men. The Tsigane leader is coiled about his fiddle,

forgetful of you to whom he is playing, aware that he is of a dynasty of gipsy music-kings with a pedigree going back a long, long way further than any foreigner can boast of.

Still, he is very glad to get your present, and he insists on escorting you to the door when you leave, bowing you out into the night with unspeakable grandeur. By now it is late—time passes rapidly when you are listening to a gipsy band—and it seems a pity to go to bed.

The air is marvellously cool after the bar, and, gratefully, you notice that most of the lights have gone to sleep. You can see the green in the sky, feel the balm of it on your eyes, which, though you do not know it, have faint purplish shadows under them. You turn down a side street, out of the Ringstrasse, into a different land.

Into a land of tall, grimy, dimly lighted houses. The door of one of these is wide open, and from a room on the left of the shabby passage float out the greenish-yellow rays of a broken gaslight and the notes of a single violin rather falteringly played. This room is the remains of what was once a prosperous eating-house for workmen. There was a time before the War when lots of beer and Salami were consumed here of a night; a time when the music was not halting, and the tall, black boots of peasants, come to town for a couple of days, stamped on the floor in ecstatic rhythm.

You are very hungry, so you order beer and bread. It is excellent, cool and fresh. The light is poor, but you can see that the proprietor is glad to

be selling something. He speaks German, and, in answer to your question as to how times are, tells you that conditions are so bad as they can be. The workmen—that is, the labourers—cannot work, there is none to be done. The others spend all their money at the places with the lights. In the corner, the man with the fiddle, a fat person with hair growing away from the temples, dressed in the remains of an old frock coat, pleads with his eyes. You buy him beer, and he scrapes his fiddle. A crazy tune which starts off on a note like the flute at the beginning of the third act of *Tristan*, a weird, hopeless note. A woman comes in from the street. She asks you for beer, which she sits by your side and drinks. She smells a little of garlic and cheap scent—like Port Said. She is pretty—dark, slim, large eyes, a turned-up nose, hair bobbed and black and curling. The tune from the fiddle changes, breaks away from the reed-slim motif into a quick, rhythmic dance. The woman leaves you and starts to dance the *Csárdás*, a Hungarian step that is intricate and rapid and whirling. When it is over, and you have bought beer all round, the woman asks you to walk home with her. She is pretty—she will tell you so naïvely—and it is quite near, and she has her papers . . .

But just at that moment, you happen to look out of the window, and through the rather grimy panes you see that the sky is changing from green-tinged black to a wonderfully rich, soft, purple-blue. It is good to see this change in the sky, from night into day, from green-black to purple-blue. The change

is so sudden that you know the sun will be up in a few minutes. You hurry out.

There is a taxi, and you tell him to go to the Danube.

The sun rises fast in Budapest, rises round and blood red. It comes over the rim of the Gellért Hill, throwing light on to the lines of the citadel and causing the hill itself to stand out clear against the fresh sky, like the white rock of Valetta when it is approached from the sea. And turning from blood red to Indian gold, the rays of the sun draw aside the curtain which overnight has hidden from sight the tiers of fairytale, white buildings that rise up into the hills of Buda from the river's side. The sun comes up, throwing light over Budapest, throwing light at your eyes. Quite suddenly, you realize that you are unbearably tired, and that bed is better than romance.

Wearily, "Dunapalota", you tell the man, wondering why he smiles in that manner.

CHAPTER X

BUDA

AFTER staying up all night, in even such an amusing place as Budapest, you are apt to be tired the next day. The best remedy for this is a Turkish bath at the Gellért Hotel in Buda, on the right bank of the river. The baths there are excellent; and it is pleasant, after one has emerged from the hot rooms and has been massaged back to vitality, to lie down for an hour and reflect a little on the history of Budapest.

Present-day Budapest is the result of the union of three different cities, of which Ó-Buda, now nothing but a rather depressing suburb of Buda, is the oldest. A long time ago, before King Stephen had christianized Hungary, there was a Roman camp at Ó-Buda. The barbarians drove out the Romans here, as they had done earlier at Sabaria, and all that now remains of the colony can be seen in the bits and scraps of Roman work that have been dug up fairly recently and placed in the local museum. The guidebooks make a great point of recommending visitors to see the remains of an aqueduct and a bath and a theatre at Ó-Buda. Personally, I would advise anyone who is not a fervent archæologist to keep away from the place, which is remote and depressing.

Incidentally, Ó-Buda, if the poets are to be believed was the centre of Attila's great camp; but that is rather uncertain. There is, however, indisputable proof that Arpád, the founder of Hungary's first Royal family, built a castle and lived there. But Ó-Buda proved to be damp and very amenable to attack, and Béla IV moved on to Buda, where he built a palace on the site occupied by the present Royal dwelling.

Of Pest, the third city of the triple alliance, I have written in later chapters.

If you have any reason to doubt the accuracy of these few remarks, ask one of the attendants at the baths. He will verify my statements, and what is more he can do so equally fluently in English, French, or German. People in Budapest, such as masseurs, concierges, waiters, and counts, are extraordinarily erudite. They know an immense amount about a vast number of subjects, from their own history down to the cost of Paprika, the age of a film star, or the latest political sensation in Chicago. The more widely travelled, retired *wagons-lits* conductors, and erstwhile foreign ambassadors, can generally offer the choice of two additional languages: Roumanian and Italian. And occasionally, if you are very fortunate, you will come across a man who speaks what he calls "perfect American".

The Gellért Hotel, like the hill in whose shadow it lies, takes its name from that saint who was the contemporary of Stephen and the instructor and second father of Saint Imre. During the summer months the Gellért is popular not so much on account

of its Turkish baths as for its electric-wave outdoor swimming pool. Here is something delightful! On a hot day, when the sun is tropical and the rocky hill of Gellért is looking more than ever like the coast of Gibraltar, you can lunch, tea, or dine on the terrace which overlooks the pool. The manly beauty and the maidenly charm of almost the best society in Budapest is gathered together, either in the pond of huge artificial waves, or at the white tables with the giant orange-and-purple-striped Lido umbrellas. Only one condition is imposed by the management: those who wish to sit during the day-time at the tables on the terrace *must* be in bathing dress. Well, I should not let this worry you. Evening frocks are longer, it is true, but bathing costumes grow briefer every year; and Hungarians are even more delightful when you meet them in the bathing pool than when you see them in their own houses.

The electric-wave pool reminds me of an American whom I met one day on the terrace. We were sitting at neighbouring tables, and he suddenly leant across to me and whispered:

“See that elderly dame coming out of the water?” nodding towards the steps. “That’s the Archduchess——”

“Yes?” I marvelled.

“Yes,” he replied. “And, say, d’you know, when I was swimming in the pool I swam *right* up against her and touched her *leg*!”

From the hotel one can either climb to the top or walk round the base of the Gellért Hill. It is well worth the trouble to do both. At the very

highest point of the hill is the old fortress of Buda, a low, flat, circling group of buildings surrounded by thick, stone bastions. By climbing to the summit, one is enabled to touch and sense the time-smoothed greyish stones of the fortress. By walking round the base of the hill, one can appreciate the impregnable thickness of the rock from which the shaped stones of the citadel were hewn. At the north side of the hill is Gellért's statue, high enough to allow the figure of the saint, holding his crucifix in both hands and looking over the river, over Pest, far beyond the Great Plain of Hungary into the lands of the East, to be in scale with the immense background of Europe.

There is a close connection between St. Gellért and the squat, grey fortress. In 1046, during the reign of Andrew I, Gellért, then Bishop of Csanad, died for Christianity. In that year there was an outbreak of Paganism in Hungary, and the Bishop, journeying to Pest to meet his King, was taken by a mob in Buda, placed in a barrel, and rolled down the side of the hill which now bears his name into the Danube. The ideals for which Gellért died in the eleventh century were ratified by the Hungarian nation when it built the citadel to be a stumbling block in the way of the Turks. Gellért had died for Christianity in the eleventh century; scores of thousands of Hungarians were continuing to lay down their lives for the same cause in the sixteenth.

Yet what a paradoxical thing is that hill! With its statue of a saint and its fortress built as the rampart of western civilization against the sweep of the

Orient, it amply justifies the claim of the Hungarian people to be the last of the West. But in its inner, age-old mysteriousness, which turns to an ultimate look of outward cynicism, one seems to recognize that very flicker of the East which would account for so much that is difficult to understand in the strangely composite character of the Magyar.

Buda, in contrast with Pest, which is utterly flat, is built on tiers of hills which rise up abruptly from the riverside. The Pest side of the river is the best place from which to get an impression of Buda as a whole; and the best vantage point in Pest is the roof-garden of the Dunapalota. People, including Hungarians, have said to me that Budapest was not a fine city. Others have told me that it was the finest in the world. I agree with the latter, but would add: on account of its situation only.

Certainly, looking from your vantage point at Buda, the sight is superb. From the northern side of the fortress-crowned Gellért hill, which hides from view the low-lying streets of Southern Buda, the buildings, which on closer inspection will rather disappoint, are perfect. It is a big thing to say that anything is perfect; but, seen from across the Danube, the domes, spires, bastions, and roofs that extend as far westward as the Coronation Church are so. And the reason for their present perfection is the same as that which accounts for your ultimate disappointment: they are amazingly large, sufficiently so to be in scale with the river flowing beneath and the hills looming behind them.

The building which sets the tone, is the motif, of

the panorama of Buda is the Royal Palace, which is more than a thousand feet long and possesses eight hundred and sixty rooms. In the fifteenth century, Matthyas Corvinus built a castle, on the site of the present palace, that was so magnificent as to cause the whole of Europe to wake to the fact that Hungary was a person of importance. The Turks destroyed the Matthyas Marvel, and Maria Theresa, who owed much to Hungary, re-built in the eighteenth century; soon after this the castle was destroyed the Matthyas marvel, and Maria Theresa, Franz Josef, though he disliked living in Budapest, made additions in 1892. Some Hungarians claim that this is the most wonderful royal dwelling in Europe. Which is absurd! But if splendour at a distance, and an inclination at nearer sight to heaviness, is regality, then it is certainly the most royal. On closer inspection, the palace, despite its terraced gardens, is disappointing. It is too large! If, and when, Hungary once more has a King, he will not use a quarter of the rooms. And one cannot help feeling a little sorry for Admiral Horthy, the Regent, and his charming wife, at being poked away in a corner of this monstrous place. In the castle there are any amount of what the guidebooks call "regally furnished and decorated apartments", which, if you have a liking for a great deal of gilt and marble, and miles of strawberry carpet, you may inspect at a cost of one *pengö*.

In the Royal chapel, there is a relic which is interesting. This is the embalmed right hand of St. Stephen. The hand, in its gold and jewelled casket,

is, after the Holy Crown, the most prized possession of the Hungarian nation. In the days when he was king, Stephen was a great figure. To-day, he is something more; is legendary and venerated. On his feast day in August, the relic is taken from the chapel and borne through Budapest amid scenes of great piety and splendour. During the Feast week, the castle, the fortress, the Coronation church, and the Fishers' Bastion are illuminated at night with scores of arc-lights. The effect is superb; like gazing upon a gigantic Taj Mahal, bathed in the rays of a gargantuan moon.

To get from Pest to Buda, one must cross the Danube; and, as Mr. G. A. Birmingham so rightly remarks in his book, the most sensible way of doing so is to go by ferry boat, since by this means it is possible to see at their best the bridges which span the river. Of the four pedestrian bridges, the Margit Hid (meaning Margaret Bridge) is the most interesting, owing to its being linked up with the Margit Insel (Margaret Island), Budapest's ultra-fashionable summer resort. Here, among other attractions, is a *kurhaus*, amply provided with healing waters. Sufferers from all sorts of disease, the names of which I have never troubled to discover, are treated most successfully.

On the west side of the Island, there is another bathing-place, having no pretensions to being anything other than amusing. Here, for ridiculously little money, you can bathe in a pool which is a splendid imitation of a Tahitian lagoon, except that, mercifully, there are no sharks. At the edges of the

pool, the water is warm, and at the centre, where subterranean springs meet it, it is positively hot! When you are tired of soaking, it is pleasant to come out of the pool and fling yourself down on soft warm golden sand and bask, one of very many, in the rays of a magnificent sun. If you are a member of Budapest's ultra-smart set, you will not bathe in the lagoon but will attire yourself very exquisitely and sit about in striped chairs, just as you do at Hurlingham or Ranelagh, and watch people playing tennis and polo most skilfully.

As motors, and even pedestrians, pay toll to go to it, the Margit Insel must provide the local authorities with a very respectable sum of money during the season.

Margit Hid is the most interesting of the four bridges, for it leads to an island that can be enchanting if you are in the right frame of mind to appreciate; but the Lánc Hid (Chain Bridge) is by far the most beautiful. About the Lánc Hid there is none of the mysterious spell of forgotten memories that settles over a person standing on an old stone structure, peering down into soft, unmoving water. Here (if he be wise and travel by ferry) he is not looking down but is actually on the water, gazing upwards at a soaring Gothic thing, which takes the feeling from out of him and stretches it in a great arch of its own pattern from side to side of the river. The water flows under the bridge very rapidly, yet with strange silence, swirling smoothly about the deep-rooted foundations.

Two hundred yards from the point on the

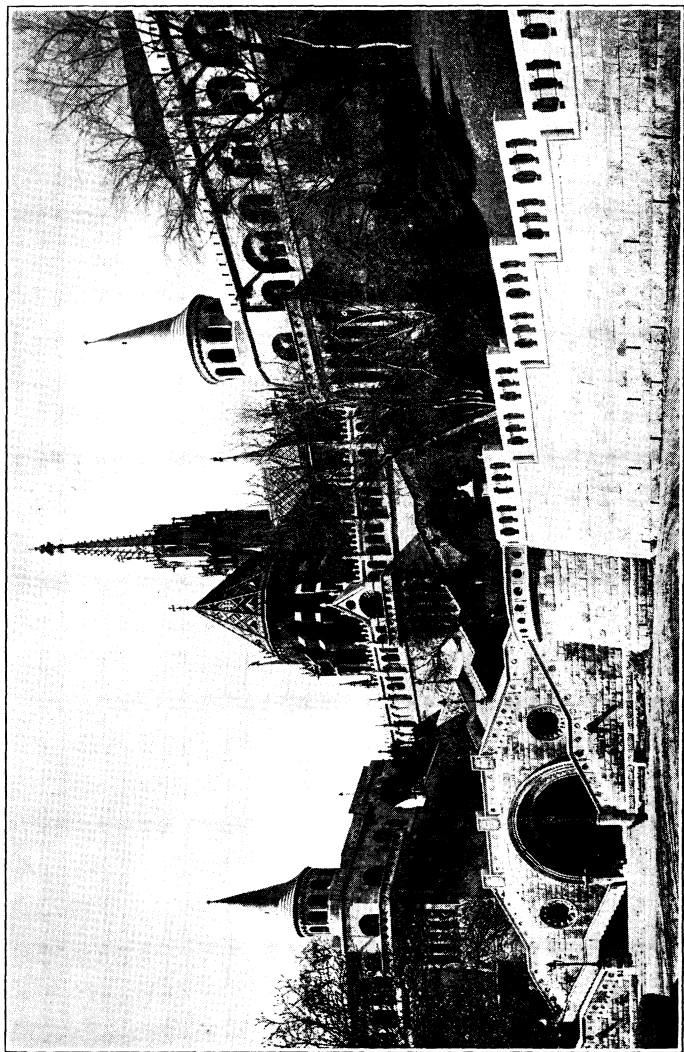


Photo by Ibasz Tourist Agency

FISHERS' BASTION, WITH CORONATION CHURCH IN BACKGROUND

embankment where the Lánç Hid joins Pest to Buda, Hunyadi János Utca turns abruptly to the right and starts to wind steeply around the side of Palace Hill, emerging eventually on to Szent György Tér, the fine open square in which are the Ministries of War and the Interior. It may sound absurd, but it is right to liken Hunyadi János Utca to a street by Dulac, curving about the side of a high mountain, on the summit of which is a fairy-tale city. The steep slope of the street is framed on the left by sweeps of close-cut grass, and on the right by a line of slim, grey houses which give place after a while to the glorious façade of the Fishers' Bastion. Between the houses and the bastion, at a point where there is a hairpin twist in the road, is an open space, through which one has a view of the Pest riverside.

Away to the left, set fair in the middle of the river, is the Margit Insel. Then comes the sweep of the Pest buildings, beginning with the huge, Victorian-Gothic Parliament Houses and the massive St. Stephen's Basilica of the same period, which stretches by the side of the river in a serpentine bend for a distance of two miles. Through a maze of tall, rearing buildings this line extends, past the Lánç Hid, the Erzsébet Hid, and the Ferencz Josef Hid, dying down finally at a point where, in the vague, heat-ridden atmosphere, the chimneys of a thick cluster of factories look like the spires of a city of cathedrals. Behind the embankment fringe of buildings, tall and broad enough to be in proportion, the vast army of the City of Pest houses, with the streets that run narrow through them looking like

comb-marks in a head of hair, go away and away back, losing themselves ultimately in the vague line of the horizon, where Pest meets the Great Plain. An inspiring sight, which enables one to realize that, from a little distance, either Pest or Buda is remarkably lovely.

The Fishers' Bastion is that part of the walls once encircling the whole of Buda which was defended in times of siege by the fishermen of the city. In the days of Matthias Corvinus, the walls were divided into sections which were manned by the various tradesmen's guilds. The shoemakers took one section, the vintners another, the butchers another, and so on. Unfortunately, only the Fishers' section is left standing to-day; but that piece, one of the few things that have been well restored in Budapest, with its thick, dull-red brick foundations, is amply suggestive of what must have been the strength of Buda in the days before long-range artillery was in use. The modern Gothic cloister, with its two slender towers, which surmounts the bastion, is the finest piece of such work I have ever seen.

Most of the Vár Tér, opening off from St. George's Square, is taken up with the castle and its stables and servants' quarters. You may or may not find the castle interesting, but you cannot fail to appreciate the exquisite proportions of the simple Empire house, standing at a little distance from the gates of the royal gardens, and overlooking the Danube, where the Prime Ministers of Hungary are lodged. This is by far the most perfect building in either Buda or Pest. Originally it was the town

residence of that Count Sándor who was a figure of note in the brilliant society of early nineteenth century Budapest. Although he appreciated the effectiveness of the simple lines of Empire architecture, the Count was sufficient of a Hungarian to have a love of display. For this reason, he caused the beautiful staircase which leads to the reception-rooms to be made broad enough for him to mount the stairs on horseback and ride into the midst of the bejewelled assembly awaiting him in the grand salon.

In Disz Tér and the narrow streets which link up St. George's Square with Szent Háromság Tér (Holy Trinity Square) are to be found many of the houses which, a hundred years ago, were the town dwellings of the great Hungarian magnates. The brothers Tharaud, joint authors of that brilliant book, "*Quand Israel est Roi*", have, as the following quotation shows, expressed perfectly the peculiar charm of these houses :

Here and there, half-covered by the yellow plaster which masks these low houses, their may be found some stone, built into the wall, on which a Turk's head is carved, or perhaps an inscription of some such kind as this: "Here, in 1450, dwelt the ruler of Bosnia", or: "Here, in 1338, was built the palace of the Regent of the Banat" You pass through a porch wide enough to permit of the passage of a carriage and pair. You enter a roughly paved courtyard where the grass is growing between the stones, where there is a well in the corner, where all round you are buildings with old tiled roofs, which look as if they were tumbling down. All that remains of the Regent of the Banat, or the Hospodar

of Wallachia, is a fragment of a rounded arch, a cellar, or a pillar over which climbs a vine where a canary's cage is hanging. . . .

From one cause or another, poverty, convenience, most of the houses of the magnates have been untenanted by their owners these many years. Yet the houses, cut up into flats, retain, for some reason I am at a loss to account for, their old beauty, even though the owners, crippled by taxation and loss, must in many cases live in actual hardship in wretched quarters.

I do not entirely agree with Mr. Birmingham, who laments that so much of the old beauty of Buda has been replaced by the swagger of the buildings of the millennial era of prosperity. It is true that that period of national prosperity was responsible for some hideous erections in the capital, but the majority of these went up in Pest. The Ministry of Finance, standing almost in the shadow of the Coronation Church, with its terrible proportions and its ghastly majolica roof, is, I admit, the ugliest building in Buda or Pest or, for that matter, in any city I have ever visited; but one building can neither make nor mar a city. For me, Buda will always have a singular charm. In streets such as Fortuna Utca, where almost every house possesses some feature which carries the mind back to the days when the Regent of the Banat was a brilliant figure; in its sweeping roads which lead upwards into the dark green of the Svábhegy; in its broad, curving river flowing so silently beneath; in the sun shining molten on to the cobbles of a courtyard; in these

features it has a semblance of eternity, so that one knows that time will come and time will go but that the spirit of Buda will linger on.

The Coronation Church is the oldest place of worship in Budapest. Begun, in the Romanesque style in the thirteenth century during the reign of King Béla IV, it was not finished until two centuries later, when King Matthyas completed it in the Gothic style. Straight away, therefore, you get that transitional style of architecture so common throughout Hungary. The reason for the church not being more beautiful than it actually is lies in the fact that, during the whole period of the Turkish occupation of Buda, it was used as a mosque. The Turks took no care of the building, with the consequence that after their departure it had to be restored. This was done first in the eighteenth century, later and more completely in the nineteenth, by a gentleman named Frederik Schulek. Schulek made an excellent restoration, so good that, at a distance, or when the arc-lights are flooding it, the church is quite inspiring. Closer to, though, it is disappointing. The roof is of majolica, new majolica, bad majolica; and the stones of the outer walls have that peculiar heartlessness that is to be found in so much modern, or near-modern, architecture. The interior of the Coronation Church, painted in brilliant colours by Székely and Agghazy, two great Hungarian artists of the nineteenth century, is as amazing as it is lovely.

Of the Coronation Church, Mr. Birmingham remarks that: "Like most Hungarian churches it

is lacking in that devotional atmosphere which elsewhere so often impresses a visitor. . . ." He goes on to say that: "The wanderer who knows Austria will be struck, painfully or pleasantly according to his own temperament, with the absence of popular devotion, acts of piety by simple people, when he comes to Hungary." In both cases I disagree entirely with Mr. Birmingham. In the first place, it is impossible to enter the Coronation Church, at any time of the day, without finding men and women kneeling either before the High Altar or in one of the side aisles in front of the statue of Our Lady or some one of the saints. And, secondly, as Mr. Birmingham should know, it is equally difficult to motor for any distance along a high road without coming across a crucifix, either in stone, or shaped from a sheet of tin, which a peasant has erected on his plot of land in supplication or thanksgiving for some favour of the Almighty. In the country in Hungary, the first note of the Angelus bells is the signal for a two-minute stoppage of all work, during which time men and women stand and recite their prayers. And, as I have already mentioned, few are the peasant homes without their crucifixes. I know Austria, and I can honestly say that, with the exception of the Tyrolese, none of the peasants there ever appeared to me to be in the least superior to their Hungarian neighbours when it was a question of piety, outward or otherwise.

Hungarians in general, and the residents of Budapest in particular, are justly proud of the river on whose banks stands the capital. They are

prouder, and even more justly so, of the Svábhegy, that strip of glorious woodland which towers above the lower hills of Buda. In comparing these hills to the Forest of Vienna, one is not, I feel, being fair to the woods which are the most beautiful feature of Budapest. The scenery through which the road winds to the highest point in the hills, where, two thousand feet above the Danube, stands the Elizabeth Watch Tower, memorial to Hungary's most beautiful and, after Maria Theresa, most well-loved Austrian monarch, is indescribably lovely. A magnificent thickness of oaks, chestnuts, and birches, growing more and more dense as the road winds higher. On a hot day, when the city is sweltering, this is a wonderful drive. As the trees close about the road, the heat-ridden haze of buildings that is Pest fades slowly from sight, and the sun, which previously has caused your eyes to ache, is unable to penetrate the cool spread of interlocking leaves. So grateful, the cool of those broad leaves; like languid fans, the hardly visible movement of the drooping birches. It is a long drive to the tower, the most beautiful drive, perhaps, in all Hungary.

To reach the tower, you must climb on foot a narrow track which curves about the side of a steep little mound growing up from the main pinnacle; and when you reach the summit, you must climb three hundred steps to gain the look-out turret. But when you have reached this point—what a view!

Directly beneath you is the city, a vague puzzle of domes, spires, roads and chimneys, silvered over

by the rays of a sun which causes the sky to be tremendously blue. The river is broad, even at this height, and clearer by far than when you are standing beside its banks. Beyond Pest, the fringe of the great Lowland vibrates in the heat. To the west, behind Buda, the hills fall away, abruptly to a smaller plain, the soil and crops of which have a water-colour tinge of purple, bounded towards Balaton by the strong peaks of the Badacsony. Northward, in the great heat, the continued line of the Buda hills is bare of vegetation, stark and hard like the Rock of Aden. A strange countryside, you feel, as you gaze at the mixture of rock-hard and femininely soft colouring. A countryside admirably suited to enclose the monument of Elizabeth, who was beautiful and a woman, who was married to Franz Josef, an Emperor even in his privacy.

CHAPTER XI

THE GREATEST HUNGARIAN

ABOUT Buda there is an air of eternity. Pest, although its origin is buried in the obscurity of the thirteenth century, does not give one the same impression of agelessness. On the contrary, it is hall-marked with the stamp of modernity, and one finds it very easy to believe that its existence as a great metropolis is so recent as the nineteenth century. If Hungary as a whole owes its existence as a Christian and civilized nation to the brilliant statesmanship of her first King, Stephen, equally certainly does Pest owe its importance as the heart of that nation to the "Greatest Hungarian", Count Stephen Széchenyi. It is a nice point as to whether or no the Count was the greatest Hungarian of all time; certainly, though, in looking through a list of epoch-making Magyars, it would be difficult to find a man whose ideals, not to mention ultimate achievements, were finer than his.

Born in 1791 of an ancient noble family, Stephen Széchenyi was not long in showing that he inherited the qualities of his father, Count Francis, who founded the National Museum of Budapest. At the age of sixteen, he began a military career, in which he served with distinction in the famous Hungarian

Huzzars. During the time that he was in the army he fought against Napoleon and took part in the Battle of Leipsic.

In the period of European peace which followed the Congress of Vienna, Széchenyi travelled much in Italy, France, and England. It was during this time of travel that he developed, not only the intense patriotism which was to spur him on to great and ever-greater efforts on behalf of his country, but as well that awareness of Self, which, in later years, led to his suicide and caused him to be one of the supreme tragic figures in Hungarian history. Returning from his travels abroad, Széchenyi was possessed of a passionate longing to raise his land to the level of the rest of European civilization and culture. He had not long to wait before an opportunity presented itself, enabling him to strike a blow for the cause he had at heart.

When, in 1825, Széchenyi, by right of birth, took his seat in the House of Magnates, the country, enraged by the arbitrary government of the past thirteen years, was only waiting for a suitable leader, to rise and follow in the footsteps of Western Europe. At his inaugural appearance in the House, Széchenyi, by a piece of revolutionary boldness, proved that he indeed was that man. It was the custom in Parliament that all debates and speeches should be made in Latin. Count Stephen, realizing the tremendous importance of fostering and developing the national language, broke this custom and made his maiden speech in the Magyar tongue. The result of this daring action was that the aristocracy

deplored and the people acclaimed him. A few days later he achieved a second triumph, this time in the Lower House. At the time, a deputy called Paul Nagy was speaking in favour of the establishment of a Hungarian Academy of Science, which should help the growth of national culture as opposed to the influence of Vienna. When Nagy had finished his speech, Széchenyi stepped forward and quietly offered to give one year's income from his estates, a matter of 60,000 crowns, towards the proposed academy. Such was the effect of his action that in a short time a further 90,000 crowns had been guaranteed, and the foundation of the academy was assured.

By his unconventional speech and the munificence of his donation, Széchenyi had established himself in the front ranks of the nation.

The first thing to be done, he saw, was to improve the cultural and material conditions of the people. In the interests of the former, he had founded the Hungarian Academy; now he must work for the improvement of financial conditions. With this end in view, he published his famous book, "Credit", a brilliant and resourceful treatise on the then more or less uncomprehended subject of banking, which provoked a storm of controversy throughout the land. It was read everywhere—in palaces, mansions, and offices—and its lauders were no less emphatic in their praise of it than its decriers, who called it the work of a communist and revolutionary agitator, were in their condemnation. In "Credit",

Széchenyi expressed in a single sentence the whole of his great ideal, when he wrote :

There are many who think that Hungary *has been*, but for my part I like to think that Hungary *shall be*.

The most astounding thing about the "Greatest Hungarian" was his universality. He had founded an academy and written a book on finance; now he turned his mind to remedying the harm done to the nation by Maria Theresa. With complete success, the Empress had seduced from Hungary the loyalty of the Magyar nobles. Széchenyi, lacking, perhaps, the personal charm of Maria, recaptured in the simplest manner this lost loyalty. Since the Hungarian aristocrat loves, above all things else, a good horse and a good club, it would surely have been the most obvious thing in the world to found institutions which should meet both demands and, at the same time, kill the lure of the Court at Vienna. Yet no one had so far thought of doing this, and it was left for Széchenyi to start the National Horse Breeding Association, fallen, since the last war, into sad disrepair, and the National Casino, to-day still the foremost social club in Budapest and known by repute throughout Europe. By founding these institutions, Széchenyi won back to Hungary the stay-away nobles. The importance of such an achievement can be appreciated perhaps only by those who know present-day Hungary, where all the forces of Bolshevism were unable to destroy the patriotic co-operation of peer and peasant.

The next step of this man, who, had he been born British, and had he emigrated to a colony, would undoubtedly have been known as an Empire Builder, was the regulation of the Danube, which, though full of tremendous commercial possibilities, was still but a potential source of wealth. He built the magnificent Lánç Hid, often referred to as the Széchenyi Bridge; then, this project successfully launched, he set to work on the details of the tunnel, running under the hill on which the palace is built, which to-day provides easy access to the country west of Buda. The next task to engage Széchenyi's attention was the establishment of the Danube Steam Navigation Company, whose steamers to this day traffic heavily in passengers and freight. With the completion of his scheme for the regulating of the River Theiss, whereby one hundred and fifty square miles of the richest agricultural land in Hungary were brought under cultivation, Count Stephen may be said to have crowned all his previous achievements, and to have reached the zenith of his popularity.

By 1840, after fifteen years of such endeavour and such popularity as no other modern Hungarian has been responsible for, Stephen Széchenyi was the idol of the countryside. And already, though he did not realize it, he was on the verge of the precipice down which, in a few extremely short years, he was to topple into the slough of remorse and despond from which he was finally liberated by his action in taking his own life.

Despite his advanced ideas in the realms of com-

merce and social reform, Széchenyi, in politics, was a Conservative. And Conservatism at this stage was the one thing which the mass of the people, nourished on the Count's enthusiasm for a Hungarian renaissance, did not want. Moreover, Széchenyi was an aristocrat, and aristocracy was a privileged and unpopular thing. Louis Kossuth, who now appeared on the political scene, was a patriot of no less enthusiasm than Széchenyi; as well, he was a member of the people. Kossuth swept to the front on the wings of that slogan which, already, had kindled the enthusiasm of France: *Liberté . . . Egalité*. Széchenyi, acknowledging the government of Vienna, had stood out for and obtained prosperity for his country. Kossuth, acknowledging all that the Count had achieved, wanted more: wanted political independence for Hungary.

In 1841 Kossuth undertook the editorship of the *Pesti Hírlap* (the *Pest Times*, to-day the foremost Hungarian newspaper), and by his writings profoundly influenced the nation. Amongst other things, he demanded the abolition of the privileges of the nobility and of their exemption from taxation, and equal rights and equal burdens for all citizens of the state. Kossuth was masterly! Not for him to bludgeon his readers' minds with a mass of statistics and facts; his writings were rich in feeling and imagery, and they roused the people to an extraordinary pitch of enthusiasm. Széchenyi began to fear this new, brilliant young man: to wonder whither all his eloquence would lead.

Széchenyi's question—Where can it all end?—

was easy enough to answer. It was towards revolution—the change-over from medieval feudalism to a state where equality and justice were to be the key-notes of government—that Hungary was heading. The rights or wrongs of the bloodless revolution of Budapest, which was accomplished on March 15, 1848, are here my concern only in so much as they affected the years of Széchenyi's life between 1840, when he was a triumphant favourite, and 1860, when he died by his own hand, a broken, disillusioned, sorrowful man.

Seven years before it actually happened, he could not know that the revolution was to be bloodless. Quite the reverse! From the moment when he began to realize that a constitutional upheaval was inevitable, the horrific notion of bloodshed was hardly ever absent from him. And with this torturing presentiment came the even more terrifying one that he—Stephen Széchenyi, who loved, and was prepared to die for, his country—was responsible for the whole of Hungary's troubles. He had made his little efforts—that much be granted his peace of mind—but was it not obvious that, had he but abandoned Vienna, he might have done so much more, might have prevented this fearful impending storm?

Early in 1848 Széchenyi's friends, innocent of any intent to hurt, told him that the revolution was really his work. At first he denied this charge—which was intended as a compliment to his patriotism—and wrote in his diary: "Who is to blame for all these things? Nobody is solely to blame! Cir-

cumstances! I brought light to our institutions—Batthyányi and Kossuth brought the fire. I was simply a reformer—I have never been an agitator. God forgive my trespass.”

Right up to the day of the revolution, Széchenyi strove, with his mind in confusion, to do the best thing for Hungary. If any feeling managed to predominate in his troubled mind, it was that of Conservatism, of adherence to the old order of things. To the very day when the revolution he strove to oppose was accomplished, Széchenyi's dearest hope was that the dynasty, with the help of Hungary, might retain the upper hand. Tragic Széchenyi, who was always the great patriot! He desired the supremacy of the Habsburgs, and yet, reading his diary, we see that, viewing the transformation accomplished by the revolution, he knew not whether to rejoice or despair. His neutral attitude is clearly shown by the entry in his journal for March 19, 1848: “I know not whether to hope or despair. I commend my relatives, myself, and my race to Thee, O God.”

From now onwards, Széchenyi broke up rapidly. His reason was leaving him, and, crowning awfulness, he was aware of the fact. In July he wrote in the journal: “In the history that is to be written I see the name of Kossuth in a sea of blood,” and on the following day: “I had a bitter night. A voice within me cried: ‘The chief share in the present subversion is thine. Every drop of blood that is shed will be upon thy head.’” At the beginning of September he wrote: “My piteous condition is

already evident to everyone," and next day there is an entry: "Desperate. . . . In forty-eight hours everything will be in flames. . . . And no one will believe it. . . . I am in a most frightful panic of mind. . . . A pistol! . . . No, not that. I cannot sleep at all. I cannot sit still in a chair for five minutes. Awful qualms of conscience. . . . I am damned! God have pity on me! I cannot see a single ray of hope in the world. . . ." After this he approached Kossuth, who told him: "I am ready to make a compromise, even with the devil, but not with Vienna and the dynasty." Kossuth's attitude was too much for Széchenyi. The following day he attempted to shoot himself, and on September 5th he was taken by his doctor to the asylum at Döbling, near Vienna.

For twelve years Széchenyi remained at Döbling, his mind alternating between periods of the most abysmal despair and entire lucidity. Thus in 1853 there was a distinct improvement in his condition. He was calmer, and interested himself once more in the outside world. He organized a campaign against the centralizing policy of the Government at Vienna, and began again to receive visitors, his family, and his political friends. By 1856 he had regained complete control of his faculties; and, had it not been for a piece of the cruellest misfortune, there is every reason to believe that he would have lived out the remaining years of his life in comparative peace at Döbling, to which place he had become deeply attached.

But it was not to be. On March 17, 1860,

Széchenyi received news that the Government was preparing against him a charge, the result of which would be that he must leave Döbling. At this time, though sixty-nine, Széchenyi was hale enough in body; but his mind, unable after years of strife to bear this fresh trouble, collapsed again, and the notion of suicide, ever present since the beginning of his decline, returned to haunt him.

On March 22, he wrote in his diary: "They (his supposed sins) will torture me without end. That I must avoid." There then followed a series of staccato entries: "My end may come at any moment." "I shudder. I cannot bear my life. Sighing, I long for annihilation." "Full of despair—last night I wished to put an end to my life." "I am desperate. . . . I cannot live and I cannot die." On March 31: "I am lost!" On April 1, the final, fatal entry: "I cannot save myself." And then, on April 8, the deed—when he shot himself through the head, blowing out his brains.

In Pest there is a statue of the tragic patriot: a very beautiful statue, in the Ferencz Josef Tér, in front of the Academy of Science which he founded. To my mind, it is a beautiful statue for the reason that it has successfully perpetuated, not the insanity which killed Széchenyi, but rather the loftiness of purpose which made him great. G. A. Birmingham has a description of this statue that is very good:

The figure of the great Hungarian patriot and statesman stands high and calm over one of the principal squares of the city which he did so much to create. All day long the traffic hurries by—tramcars whose trollies,

racing along the overhead wires, shriek hoarsely, great wagons heavily laden with the cargoes of the river steamers, the motor-cars of the very rich, the fast-trotting horses which the Hungarian nobility still love to use in their carriages, the humble hired carriages which crawl along, the unending stream of foot passengers, hurrying, sauntering, eager about this or that, ever going on and back and on and back. But the figure on the pedestal does not look at this.

The head is slightly, ever so slightly, turned to the right, and the eyes of the great Count, if these stone eyes can see at all, are fixed on the river, where now whole fleets of steamers thrash with their paddle-wheels the yellow water on which he launched the first of them. From German towns, through Austrian lands, past medieval castles, past Vienna, they come . . . till they reach the shores of the Black Sea and transfer their cargoes into ocean-going ships. The mighty traffic of innumerable steamers! And this man made the beginning of it!

Across the river the eyes see—or might see if they saw at all—the span of the Lánc Hid, the chain bridge which his mind conceived, which his energy created, across which go hurrying crowds, to which the steamers passing up and down make their obeisance. . . .

Those stone eyes of the great Count can see, I am sure; they look out from the face at the bustle and movement; at the prosperity and sadness, inseparable from a great city; at the changing beauty of the sky, as it turns from clear gold and clearer blue to night, which is purple-black, flushed with mysterious green. . . . Yes, the eyes can see, and the eyes must rejoice. For in the days when Széchenyi was moulding it, Pest suffered. And then the city recovered and went from strength to

strength, till there came the War and its effects, disasters which Széchenyi, in his moments of utter despair, could never have imagined. And yet, once more, Pest is rising, slowly it is true, but surely; is shaking off the memory of the organized and the haphazard horrors. . . . Pest—Buda—Hungary—suffered from the War as no other country suffered: and to-day the whole of the mutilated nation is making a “come-back” in the face of gigantic odds in the way that no other nation is doing. Which latter fact must be gratifying to the mind of Count Stephen. Széchenyi gave his life for Hungary. It is his reward that, two generations later, Hungary is proving very worthy of the sacrifice.

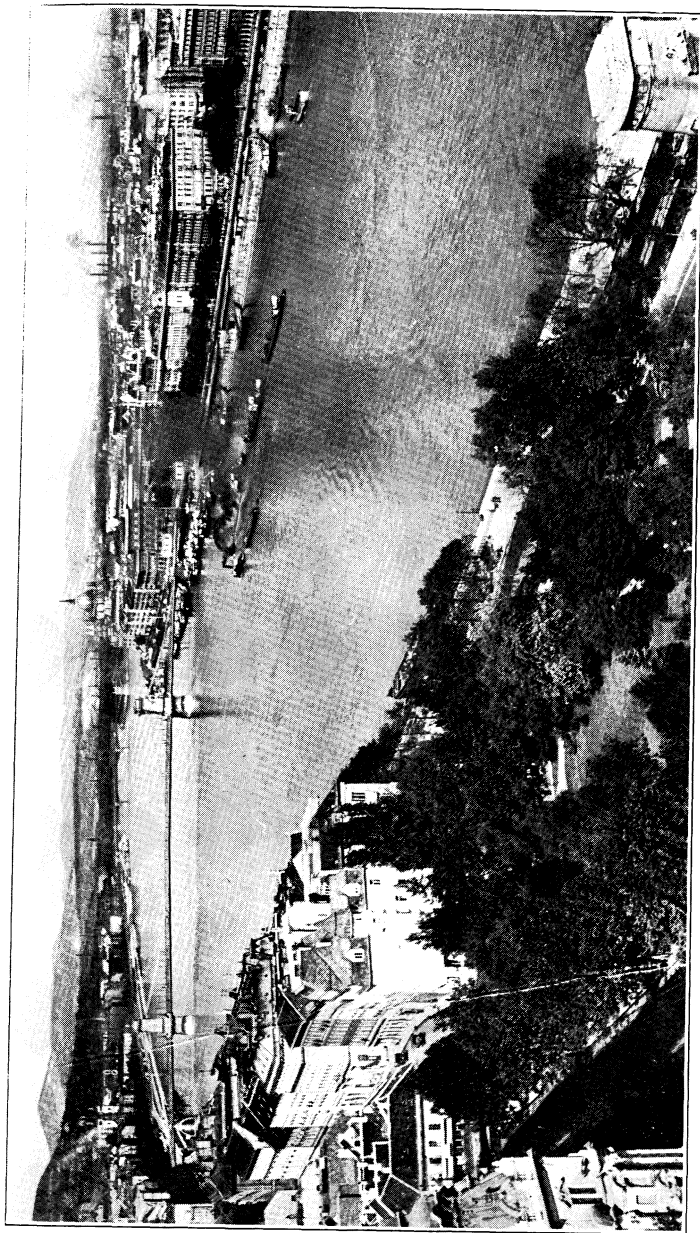


Photo by Ibase Tourist Agency

PANORAMA OF BUDAPEST

CHAPTER XII

PEST

THE happiest place in Budapest is on the Pest side of the Danube, a few metres below the Ferencz Josef Hid. Here is the great produce market of the city, a double row of multi-coloured stalls, with a narrow cobbled roadway down the middle, which extends for more than a kilometre downstream. At the Franz Josef Bridge, the *rakparts* finish, and from there on there are only two levels, that of the street well up above the water, and that of the market which is but six feet higher than the Danube. You have to go down some steps to reach the market, and doing so is like descending from a busy and very civilized earth into an Aladdin's lamp world.

In the Produce Market of Pest, everything that is grown in Hungary is sold in season. Acacia trees, very young and slender, potted tulips or dahlias or chrysanthemums, melons, peaches, lemons, strawberries, red currants, asparagus, apples, pears, grapes, quinces, peas, Paprika, parsnips, onions, cabbages, carrots, cauliflowers, beetroot, sugar-beet, oats, rye, wheat, chickens, geese, turkeys, and a lot of other things which I have forgotten can be seen there between January and December. A breathtaking, coloured stock, arranged with passionate

care by men and women in most perfect sympathy with their wares.

Look at that old woman there! With her work-streaked, yet russet-clean, face; her rounded figure in its red-and-yellow-spotted skirts; her general air of freshness and acid-tinged good humour; she is beautifully like either of those fine, curving apples she has taken out of a paper-filled basket and is holding out to you as a temptation to buy. Then there is that old man, further down the line, who is taking beetroot out of a huge, long sack. The beet-roots are thrilling things, earthy and soil-scented on the outside, but with a superbly vivid, dark crimson showing where a bruise has scraped their skin. The old fellow is just like his beetroot. It is true that the thick stubble covering part of his face is white, but see the rim of darkness (it is only earth) under the tips of his horny finger-nails! And the amount of red blood in his body must be enormous to cause the blue veins of his hands to stand out like that! His wife, a fat woman with chins, a wonderfully worked shawl, and a smile which causes her still good eyes to lose themselves in the rolls of her face, has a complexion exactly like the glossy, purple cabbages she is selling. One could go on for a long time finding parallels between root-crops, vine-fruit, and human beings, but there is not the space.

Some things, of course, cannot be paralleled; they are unique. Of such I saw two one afternoon in the market; saw them within the space of half an hour. The first was the head of a man, the most perfect head of a man I have ever seen. He was not

a pure-bred Hungarian; was probably a mixture of Hungarian and gipsy. The body attached to the head was at attention in the midst of half a dozen assorted cases of pale green cabbages, darkest blue grapes, and scarlet Paprika fruit; the head was on the shoulders of the body, but turned to the left, facing downstream towards the east. The hair of this head was very positive, black and jungle-thick; and the eyes were also black, with faintly brown-tinted whites. The nose was straight, thin at the bridge, and broadening outwards slightly the whole of its rather brief length. The skin, neither olive, nor cinnamon, nor sunburn-bronze, was a mixture of all three. And there was an expression about the lips such as I have seen once before in a Murillo painting of a beggar boy. The head was on the body's shoulders, I repeat, but it was apart from the body, turned to the left, towards the Balkans and Asia, beyond which lies Egypt, before India.

The second uniquely beautiful thing I saw that afternoon was a stall, covered with onions, at the extreme end of the market. The setting was good: large, ripe carrots to the left, and vivid, water-sprinkled sliced green turnip-tops in baskets to the right. The onions hung in strings all about the central stall, small, delicately shaped, graduated, cloudy silver-grey shapes, like ropes of exquisite pearls dominating a jumble of emeralds and rubies and barbarically brilliant precious stones. Aristocrats, those onions, so superbly, yet unostentatiously, aware of their superiority.

It is not all still life in the produce market by

the Franz Josef Bridge. There is movement there as well. The cobbled road, lined by the stalls, is narrow and tricky, but large horse-wagons and small hand-moved trolleys and red-capped porters career from end to end at an amazing speed. Typical of Pest, that: mad speed and rare accidents. It is good to watch a perky youth with insolent eyes cursing an old porter who will *not* get out of his way; to see the slow grin on the old man's face as he finally makes room; to hear the frightful, but unintelligible, wrath of a saint-like vendor in tall boots and black, sheep's-wool cap, as a trolley bumps his outlying fruit-cases; to catch a sudden, quick glimpse of a tug-boat sweating against the fastness of the river's flow; to have an old woman, with wizened face and steel-strong arms, clutch at you and beg for money; to feel the venom and satisfaction which fleck the gossip-chattering lips of a pair of neighbours; to sense the appreciative rapture of that flashing, dark girl, as the tall fellow with the thin, strong legs darts at her in the corner of their stall; to realize, above all else, that, though the world may be bad and sad, and that civilization may be toppling, here, quite unconcerned, parochial in its way, the life of the market is going on . . . and on . . . and on . . . vivid, shimmering, alive.

You will see an odd, stone-still, fatefully beautiful face in the market; and you will see strings of onions like smoke-grey pearls. These are exquisite sights, isolated. The dominant note—that which causes the skins of apples and the faces of old women to glow—is one of life, of core-deep, moving life.

The most amazing thing about Pest is the proximity of a place like the produce market (which respectable people might call a slum) to that part of the Franz Josef *rakpart* where are the hotels. It takes perhaps fifteen minutes to walk from one to the other; and it takes but half that time to get to Apponyi Tér, midway between the two.

Apponyi Tér, one of the finest squares in Pest, is named after Count Albert Apponyi, the Great Old Man of Hungary. Great, Count Apponyi certainly is. At the age of eighty-four he has a beard and a figure that W. G. Grace would have given quite a number of records to possess; and, as well, this veteran Hungarian statesman can still make exceedingly pregnant political speeches in five different languages. Count Apponyi is, I think, the only person I have ever met who is entirely and invariably self-possessed. On the occasion of the St. Stephen procession last year, I was sitting on the balcony of the Royal Opera House when the Regent, seven cardinals, a score of visiting bishops, and all the well-known men in Hungary were marching past. The day was magnificent, the Regent resplendent, the cardinals' robes superb. The million people in the street below were letting themselves go, cheering. Came a brief lull in the applause, and then, quite suddenly, the most colossal outburst of cheering and hand-clapping I have ever heard. Count Apponyi had come out on to the balcony, and the crowd had for the moment gone mad. Fascinated, I watched the Count, and marvelled at the manner in which, with three perfectly controlled bows, he

acknowledged his greeting and procured attention for the next figures of importance in the procession.

At Bayreuth, the month before, when Toscanini, ex-King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, the ex-Crown Prince of Germany, an exceedingly lovely Italian Princess, myself, several Grand and ordinary Dukes, and countless lesser fry were walking about during the intervals, the only person whom anyone ever seemed to discuss was Count Albert Apponyi. While he, dressed in an appallingly fitting frock-coat, with his hands clasped behind his back, his shaggily-browed eyes bent to the ground seeing nobody, strolled about quite alone, entirely unconscious of anything save the music of Wagner. Which latter fact, at a place like Bayreuth, is surely the hall-mark of greatness.

It was a deserved honour that the Hungarian nation paid the Count when they named a principal square in the capital after him. I only hope that they will allow the name to remain when he is no longer living. Vörösmarty Tér, at the end of Váci Utca opposite to Apponyi Tér, is a good example of the fickleness of a people's devotion to a great name. Originally, Vörösmarty Tér was known as Gisella Tér in memory of the consort of King Stephen. Gisella being the wife of the most venerable figure in Hungarian history, one would have imagined that she would be allowed to keep her square in peace. But she was not! There arose a young poet called Vörösmarty, who captured the fancy of the nation; and, when he died, the Queen had to abdicate her place of honour in his favour.

There is in this particular square a pastry-shop which is famous. It was started by a gentleman called Gerbeaud, a Frenchman, who made excellent cakes, and who had a wonderful stock of tokay. Before the War it used to be the thing for the Countess X to ring up the Countess Y in the morning and ask her to rally round at Gerbeaud's at midday for a cake and a tot of tokay. Now it is no longer the thing. The cakes and the tokay are still excellent, but the society which frequents Gerbeaud's has fallen off, degenerated into wealthy Semitic. I tell you this for your guidance, lest you should, as I did, offend someone who is neither rich nor a Jew, by suggesting a meeting there.

The amusing thing about it all is that Gerbeaud's is exceedingly popular with its new *clientèle*; so much so that one must often fight, if one is odd enough to wish to go there, to get in. And Vörösmarty Tér is now almost better known as Gerbeaud Tér! First a Queen, then a poet, now a pastry-cook! Terrible! One can only hope that future Governments will not permit the same outrageous degeneration in Apponyi Tér.

Váci Utca, the Old Bond Street of Budapest, connecting Apponyi Tér with Vörösmarty Tér, is even narrower than its London namesake; and, if possible, the prices of the diamonds, dressing-cases, ties, collars, hats, and perfumes displayed in the shop-windows are even more excessive. At the right times of the day—between eleven and one and four and six—there is always a closely packed mass of interesting people in Váci Utca: charming women

of many nationalities, and men who are mostly Jews. Nearly all the women are, as women ought to be, attractive. The fascinating ones—equally rightly—are Hungarians. There is a freemasonry among women: the desire for *chic*. Nowhere in the world is this freemasonry better understood than in Budapest, where the women are uniformly (not regimentally) smart. It is useless to ponder on the number of feminine hearts that have been lacerated in the search for that elusive quality, smartness; but this much I can tell those who are baffled by their inability to achieve it: it is not possible to attain to outward *chic* unless, first, an inward spiritual sprightliness has been acquired.

Which is where the Hungarian woman in general, and those of the capital in particular, score: they are possessed of a tremendous spiritual vitality, which, extending right through their entire beings, enables them to carry with careless ease such trifles as clothes and years. I cannot remember where I read that, so soon as a person is bored, that person is middle-aged. But in Budapest I defy anyone to find a middle-aged woman; for the excellent reason that there are none who are bored. They are all of them alive—aflame—with enthusiasm: the young with the literal *joie-de-vivre*, the old with the satisfaction of having lived fully.

You will see what I mean when you have walked the length of Váci Utca a few times. The streets may be full of women, American, English, or Colonial women, but always the Hungarians will stand out and hold your attention. They are dark

and brilliant, and they move with an abandon which is not reckless. Countesses, chorus-girls, out-of-work typists, shop assistants, *gamines*, they are a sisterhood, having as their watchword, Vitality!

The men in the fashionable street are for the most part Jews. Rather handsome, rather fleshy, rather opulent, rather unpopular Jews. It is a good thing for Váci Utca that there are these Jews who will buy for their womenfolk the jewels, gold-fitted weekend cases, hats, gloves, stockings of most transparent silk, perfumes, plate, linen, and what-not displayed in the shop windows. If it were not for them there would be even more financial failures in the Budapest Bond Street than actually there are. Members of the upper classes in Hungary are, almost without exception, hard up. If they wish to buy the lovely things in the smart shops, they must have credit. After the War, many of the shopkeepers, in their loyalty, gave large credits to their old and recently embarrassed customers, forgetting that they themselves must have a regular revenue to meet wholesale liabilities. That revenue was not forthcoming. The wholesale creditors foreclosed. There was a crop of bankruptcies.

Sad, but inevitable!

To-day, for the simple reason that shopkeepers as well as the upper classes are hard hit, credit is a thing hard to obtain in Budapest. Count Stephen Széchenyi would have agreed with me, I think, that there would be no credit, and no trade, and no Váci Utca whatsoever during these bad times, were it not

for the supply of ready money with which the Jews settle their transactions.

Maria Valeria Utca, lying parallel to Váci Utca, is in itself of no particular interest. The offices of the *compagnie des wagons-lits* are in this street, and the backs of the great hotels facing the river abut on to it also. But the streets linking Váci Utca to Maria Valeria Utca are of the greatest import. Here, in narrow dark by-ways, are the shops in which, if you are wise, you will make your purchases of shoes, boots, portmanteaux, pocket-books, or anything that you may require in the way of leatherwork, the craft at which the Hungarians are superior to all other nations. In the windows of shops in the side-streets I have mentioned, you will find hand-made shoes of a shape so perfect that, whether or no you need them, you are compelled to go in, try on, and purchase some pairs. These shoes invariably fit perfectly, and I can say from experience that the number of years that they last is positively infuriating. The prices range between forty and sixty shillings, in English money, and are absurdly reasonable for the quality of the leather and workmanship. For such things as shirts, socks, boots, tooth-paste, soap, whisky (Scotch), and razor-blades, Budapest is expensive; but for shoes, or for any form of leatherwork, it is gloriously cheap, if only you will shop in the side-streets.

CHAPTER XIII

PEST

TWO subjects of which anyone visiting Hungary to-day cannot fail to hear considerable discussion are the Treaty of Trianon, whereby Hungary lost extensive territory, and the six months of Bolshevist misrule into which the country was plunged in July, 1919. Concerning the treaty I have not much to say in this chapter; but about the Reign of Terror I propose to be slightly more lengthy, since that débâcle is closely bound up with the Jewish Question, a third subject towards which the attitude of Hungarians must inevitably strike a casual voyager as being fanatical.

Trianon was bad for Hungary, but not nearly so devastating from the point of view of morale as the Bolshevist regime. By Hungarians, the treaty is regarded as a dreadful disfigurement of their land, but as a disfigurement which will ultimately yield to treatment. The Bolshevism is different. That was a ghastly, cancerous growth . . . and now it is gone. It was taken in time, Hungarians tell themselves, before it had gone too far and become malignant . . . And yet, they are not so sure. Was it *really* taken in time? Did it not leave a latent infection here? Or there? Or somewhere else on the already enfeebled body of Hungary? You

never can tell, they say to themselves; cancer is one of those things about which one can never be quite sure.

To use a familiar expression, the Hungarians are suffering from a complex: the Bolshevist complex, which is merely another way of saying the Jewish complex.

For the ringleaders of the Bolshevik movement in Hungary were indisputably Jews, financed from and tutored by Russia. The commander-in-chief of the Jewish ringleaders was a man called Béla Kun, a swindler, a pervert, and a thoroughly bad Jew. Starting life as a provincial journalist, Kun early showed himself to be indifferent to the moral standards in acceptance among the mass of the people; and, by way of bribery, extortion, and embezzlement, he rose rapidly to a position of leadership in the ranks of the undesirables. After the War, his abilities as a formentor of disaffection were not long in finding recognition, and right at the beginning of the revolution we find him appointed as People's Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. The headquarters of the new Commissioner were in the Hotel Dunapalota, where he lived, surrounded by a bodyguard armed with rifles and hand grenades, in the height of luxury, at the same time that his famous slogan, "Rise, starving proletarians, rise," was echoing throughout the capital. Although his official title was that of Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Kun was virtually a dictator; and, at his word, a terrible campaign of torture, mutilation, robbery, murder, looting, rape, and complete lawlessness was

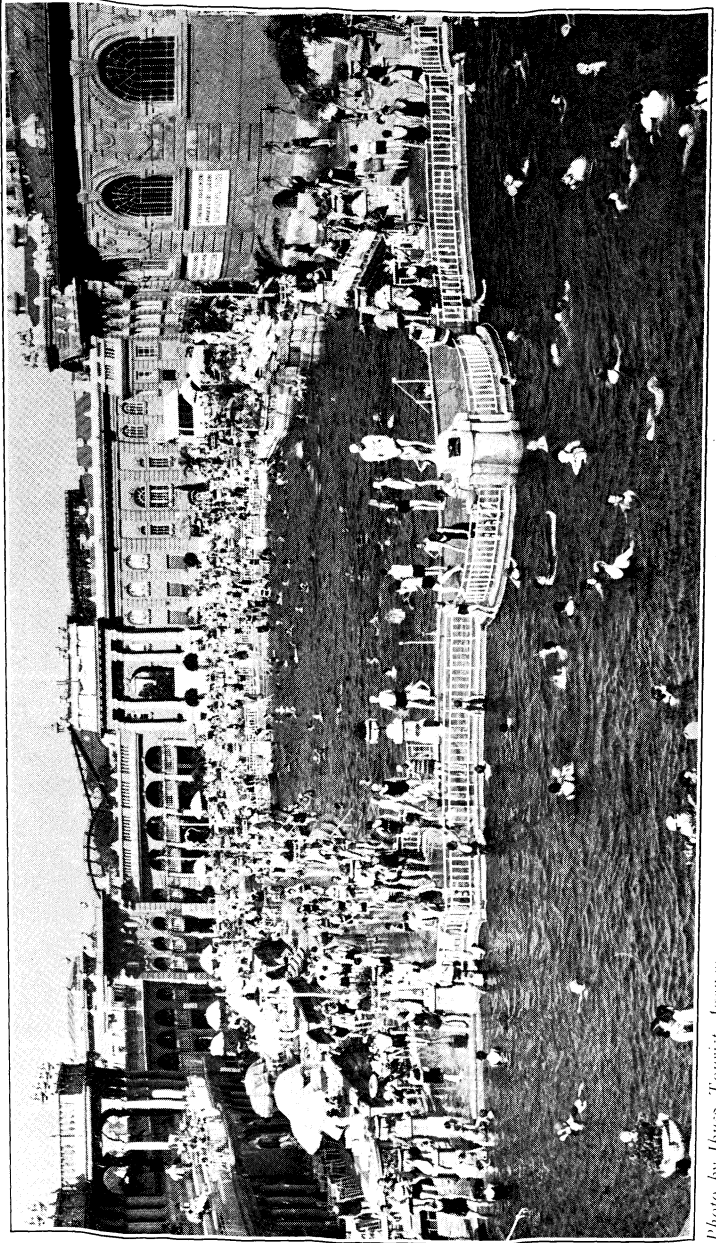


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

BUDAPEST: THE SZÉCHÉNYI BATH

launched in Budapest against men, women, and institutions belonging to the hated aristocratic, learned, and bourgeois classes. The Danube, if it did not run red, was liberally tinted with the blood of the victims whose scourged and bayoneted bodies were cast into its waters; and to stumble across a corpse in the street was a mere commonplace. Hell, in a word, was let loose in Budapest by Béla Kun.

The memory of that hell is still haunting those—including many Jews—who suffered in it, rather in the manner that the childish notion of hell and the devil can return occasionally and terrify even the most sophisticated of grown-ups. In Budapest to-day, bathing at the Gellért, watching tennis on the Margit Insel, drinking a cocktail at the Dunapalota, listening to Puccini at the Opera, you can see Hungarians doing the same thing and apparently enjoying it. But get those people away from the crowd, sit alone with them in their homes, and you will remark a difference. Watch your host gazing at a painting, your hostess talking with a child, and notice the expressions on their faces. Now—for all their vitality and charming grace—they are worried! And presently the cause of their worry is made known to you in a sentence something like this:

“I wonder whether it is all finished, this Bolshevism. You know, we have had it before in Hungary, and it was not good. They say that it is over and finished . . . but I am not so sure. . . .”

And there is a knock at the door and a servant comes in and says that yet another of the city's vast army of beggars is outside, soliciting one of those

silvery *pengös* of the reconstructed, post-revolutionary currency. It may be the sixth, the seventh, the dozenth beggar who has called that day, a deserving case, a genuinely hungry, a would-be respectable citizen. And the money is given, and again your friends say to themselves:

“I wonder whether it is all over . . .”

Yes, the Bolshevism was bad, and the Hungarians can neither forget nor forgive the Jews who started it!

Which is a great pity; almost a disaster! For not only does the memory depress the Hungarians themselves, but as well it makes them dangerously conscious of all Jews, so many of whom are excellent people.

I am no more pro-Israelite than I am pro-Bolshevik. I realize just as well as the most fervent Magyar does that to be European is one thing and to be Semitic quite another. I do not for a moment suggest that the Hungarians should take the Jews to their hearts. I have never thought that it would be a good thing for the white races to intermarry with the black. But I do think that it is a pity for any race of people to have and to foster too strong a dislike for any other race living in their country. For one thing it makes both races so appallingly conscious of themselves, which is an unhealthy state of affairs; and, particularly, in the case of Hungarians and Jews, it seems to me a little hard on the Jews.

For in my humble opinion, the majority of the Hungarian Jews are faithful to Hungary; which being so, it is lamentable that the majority, who

might well be fine patriots, should have to suffer for the sins of a mere handful who caused a trouble that is now history. Robert Birkhill, in his book, "Seeds of War", discussing the question of the Hungarian minority in Czecho Slovakia, has a paragraph which is illuminating of the feelings of Hungarian Jews as a whole:

"Lastly," writes Mr. Birkhill, "there are the Jews, who are to be found in large numbers all over the territory which is still or was formerly Hungarian: the authorities in the new states are now separating the statistics for the Jewish population from those for the Magyars; but since the former have always chosen to be looked upon as true Hungarians, and have only the Magyar language for a mother-tongue, there seems absolutely no reason for putting them in a category by themselves."

Those to whom Mr. Birkhill refers are Hungarian Jews in general. I now want to say a word about one Hungarian Jew in particular, who (in my humble opinion) has done almost as much good for Hungary as Béla Kun did harm.

William Löew, the translator into English of Petöfi, Ady, Arany, Vörösmarty, and many of the lesser Magyar poets, was born, the son of rabbi Lipot Löew, at Szeged in the Hungarian Lowlands. At the age of nineteen, he emigrated to America, where after working for a while as a labourer, he graduated lawyer of the New York bar. For a while he did remarkably well, until, to the horrified surprise of his friends, he suddenly "went mad", abandoned his legal work, and started to translate the

poems of the Magyars into English. From his home government he had neither money nor influential aid; but from his memories of Hungary he derived a never-failing flow of sustenance, which spurred him on to great and ever greater enthusiasm for his endeavours. In the preface to a volume of Löew's translations, which I have before me now, there is the following:

A garland of Hungarian poems translated into English! Some are old, others new, some are classical, some of our days, but they are gathered into a single volume for one aim: to call the attention of readers in distant England, America, and Australia to an unknown, forlorn race which lives between the Danube and the Theiss. . . .

Which is a good reason for publishing the volume; and the reason why Löew forsook a promising and lucrative profession to "go in for" writing! Löew, like Saint Paul, was a patriot; and, like that evangelist, the Hungarian Jew was sustained by the sheer beauty of the gospel which he preached.

Leaving aside altogether, for the moment, the æsthetic attainments of Löew (and they are undoubted) one cannot but appreciate that he was one of the greatest Hungarian propagandists of the twentieth century. And propaganda is a thing which counts for a great deal to-day in Hungary, where, unfortunately, Löew does not!

In an earlier chapter, I promised to introduce you to the pleasant Jews of Budapest. I must keep

that promise. These pleasant Jews do not live in opulent houses; nor are they the ones, with lots of stomach and chin, who drive in colossal cars, have their faces massaged, and drink champagne instead of water. No, these pleasant Jews live in a quarter of their own: a place complete with Jewish cinemas and eating-houses, to which only Jews go. Even if Jews do not greatly interest you, it is worth while to go and look at Király Utca, the main street of the quarter, reminiscent of those weird native streets in the back-blocks of Calcutta, or of the narrow, dark, strangely clean by-ways of Limehouse.

Here is local colour for you; here, a quick, thick life. Colour, speed, thickness! Utterly different from the produce market, this, with none of the sense of russety and spasmodic progress that one found by the Franz Josef Bridge; but vibrant with a close-bolted, adjusted efficiency. The market was full of nature. This is machinery, where the number of revolutions of the wheel has taken the place of the frequency of pulse-beats.

In Király Utca, where many of the better class Hungarians do their shopping, the windows of the shops do not have that so attractive, unpriced bareness of Váci Utca, Bond Street, Fifth Avenue, or the rue de la Paix. Here the stock is crowded into the windows, priced and repriced (there seems to be a never-ending sales-season!), with every article marked down to a figure which is compellingly attractive. The stock is amazingly varied. A drogeria sells all the usual drugs and toilet accessories, and as well the window is crammed with a

gloriously vivid assortment of celluloid farmyard-animals, scintillating cheap jewellery, satin-covered coat-hangers, aluminium hot-water bottles, and, as I have once seen, babies' hanging cradles. The same thing with a provision shop, where in addition to tinned and bottled meats and vegetables, candles, vinegar, and sacks of sugar, maize, oats and rye, you can buy matches, tobacco, rough suits of clothing, brightly coloured wools, ink, pens, paper, and a superb miscellany of objects. The windows of bookshops are stuffed with copies of the Talmud, which stand side by side with Hebrew novels decked in violently coloured jackets, huge sticks of luscious sealing-wax, small, heavily-bearded statues, and thick bundles of cheap notepaper. The billboards of cinemas are covered with masses of indecipherable strokes and the equally mysterious faces of American actresses. And from the eating-houses, gaslit, vapoury, crowded rooms, there wafts out an odour of close-packed humanity, scent, and food which, though physically nauseous, is spiritually uplifting. At night the lights are turned on in the shop-windows, crude, glittering, nine carat gold lights, which burnish up the stock and cause the red-slashed price markings to scream aloud to passers-by.

Bargains in Király Utca ? Yes, if you want them ! Soap, silver, sables, cigarettes . . . Bargains, but not sensations. Jews are too clever for that ! No old Herend porcelain or Transylvanian jewellery going for a song, but lots of household goods at competitive prices. And if you do not want bargains, then

you can look at the people who do. At smallish Jewesses and tallish Hungarians; at bearded Jews with rather large lips, and at very young boys with very dark hair; at people with gold in their teeth and rings on their hands, with their teeth in the gold and their hands in their pockets. Or, if it is not even people you wish to watch, but rather persons, take a stroll up the darker side streets, and look into doorways and peer down courtyards, and there you will see the odd, few individuals who are out of place in the bustle of the main street; who, even though they be "those Jews", are foredoomed to failure. They lounge against grubby archways, these failures-to-be, alone and gazing upwards at a strip of sky which is terribly narrow between the heights of uprearing buildings, or they stand with a girl, a smallish, dumpy, dark Jewess. . . .

You may not find these ghetto Jews pleasant; may loathe the Semitic graft of them; may be nauseated by their dark, shining hair and slightly pigeon-toed feet done up in cheap, American or English shoes. And you may be justified in your loathing. But you must admit that there is a power about them, about their garish, thin, crowded quarter. It is hard to say what is this power, but I think that it lies in their tremendous earnestness; in their passionate, yet withheld, determination to succeed in making money, so that they may grow fat and become as those others who ride in motors.

And when it is broiling hot in summer, and, through a dim doorway, in a small room cluttered with magnificent fur, you see a beady-eyed, black-

haired, curved-nosed figure stitching away at the rich cloak which some lovely young thing will wear at next winter's opera; and when it is deadly cold in winter and you turn into a side street and peer into a greyish den and watch a lean fellow with a greenish-tinted, olive skin shaping those crushed felt hats that are going to be so chic next summer; then you cannot help admiring these Hungarian Jews of Budapest.

When you are tired of the ghetto, turn down any of the streets branching to the left out of Király Utca, and you will soon find yourself in Andrásy Út.

Andrásy Út used once upon a time to be the smartest street in Pest. Now it is not. At its beginning, where it branches off at right angles from the Vilmos Császár Út, Andrásy Út is definitely bad. The shops are small and meagre, and there is that indefinable air of decay which one associates with thoroughfares which were once smart and are now merely drab. But the street is three kilometres long, and, after walking a tenth part of its length, the atmosphere changes suddenly for the better as one approaches the Royal Opera House. As a matter of fact, the Royal Opera House, during the season months, is the most fashionable place in Budapest. The exterior of the building is magnificent in the Italian renaissance style, but within there are so many foyers, passages, reception-rooms, and superbly broad staircases that the space for the auditorium has been greatly eaten into. Whenever Jeritza, who is a great favourite in Budapest, or one of the local singers in a well-loved rôle, is singing,

there is always insufficient room for those who wish to attend the performance.

The general level of opera in Budapest is very high. The voices and staging at the Royal Opera House, where that superb musician Dohnanyi conducts, are, with the exception of Milan, Dresden and Bayreuth, as good as anything I have seen in Europe. The credit for this high pitch of excellence must go largely to the Government which, during the past exceedingly difficult ten years, has subsidized the opera very heavily indeed.

Quite apart from the excellence of the opera itself, the audiences which go to hear it are splendid. What a joy, that in Budapest it is considered bad form to arrive late at a performance; that it is considered almost equally bad form to be bored by it! There, the feeling is, that if you cannot arrive in time, and are incapable of enjoying yourself when you have arrived, then it is merely good manners to stay away. It is hugely delightful to take your seat in the Royal Opera House, a few minutes before the curtain goes up, and to know that after the act has started there will be no one squeezing, and pushing, and apologizing before your eyes and over your feet. Then again, the Hungarians have a very fine appreciation of music, which they reward nightly with spontaneous applause. No polite hand-clapping, or stifled yawning, here; but amazing enthusiasm, and enthusiastic amazement, translated into bouquets which are tossed over the footlights in the form of volleys of applause.

From the Opera House onwards, Andrásy Út is

very rich. Now the street is broad, divided into three distinct roads—a central, wide one for taxis and private cars, and two narrow flanking ones reserved solely for buses and heavy traffic—and bordered on both sides by great houses. A generation ago this great thoroughfare was not a street at all, but a sort of Budapest Rotten Row, with the tan where the buses now run, and broughams and landaux stepping it out in the middle . . . Now it is mostly owned by wealthy Jews, and the traffic roars up and down in a ceaseless stream.

At the end of Andrásy Út is the Millennial monument, memorial to Hungary's thousand years as a nation. I like this memorial, with its tall, slender central pillar, on top of which stands the figure of the Archangel Gabriel holding the Hungarian double cross in his hands. There is about the ascendancy of this pillar the same sort of fantastic potentiality that one sees in the Nelson Column in Trafalgar Square. If only one could get to the top, one feels, it would be the most simple matter to step into heaven, or New York, or Honolulu, which ever one most wished to visit. At the foot of the pillar is the National Memorial to those Hungarians dead in the last war, the grave of the Unknown Soldier. The tomb is beautifully plain, with no decoration other than a cross in the shape of a sword on the top. On either side of the Archangel pillar is a colonnade, decorated with figures of the greatest Hungarian kings. And, flanking the colonnades, and set back at a splendid distance, are the Szépművészeti museum (National Gallery) on the

left, and the Uj Mücsarnok (Gallery of the newly founded Art Union), where most of the modern exhibitions take place, on the right.

The National Gallery has a remarkably fine collection of Old Masters, the nucleus of which was acquired when, in 1871, the Government purchased four hundred pictures from the Prince Esterhazy. In the sixteen rooms devoted to the works of the Italian, Dutch, Spanish, and English schools there are pictures which any gallery in its right senses would sell its soul to possess. Where my particular soul is concerned, I should be quite willing to give it (artistically speaking) for any one of the seven Murillos which share a room with the Goyas, El Grecos, and Velasquez.

CHAPTER XIV

PEST

THE Millennial monument serves a double purpose, for, as well as commemorating Hungarian history, it provides a remarkably fine entrance to the Város Liget, the great park of Budapest. Before you actually get to the park, you must cross a fine bridge, which spans an artificial lake. In summer, this lake is full of unreal-looking, but very lovely, water; and, in winter, the artificial ice on which one skates is equally beautiful to look at. The electric lights with which the lake is flooded at night are perhaps the best piece of imitation of all.

No, that is not true! The best piece of imitation (or call it copying) is the Museum of Agriculture, standing in the lake to the right of the bridge. From an agricultural point of view, this museum has the reputation in Europe of being very good. As a piece of triumphant daring and brilliant copying, the building in which the exhibits are housed is the finest I have ever seen.

The Hungarian recipe for constructing a successful Agricultural Museum is as follows: take of the best Romanesque, Gothic, renaissance, and baroque to be found in your country equal parts. Have a sheet of smooth water in which to arrange the ingredients. Stir mixture thoughtfully, and be sure

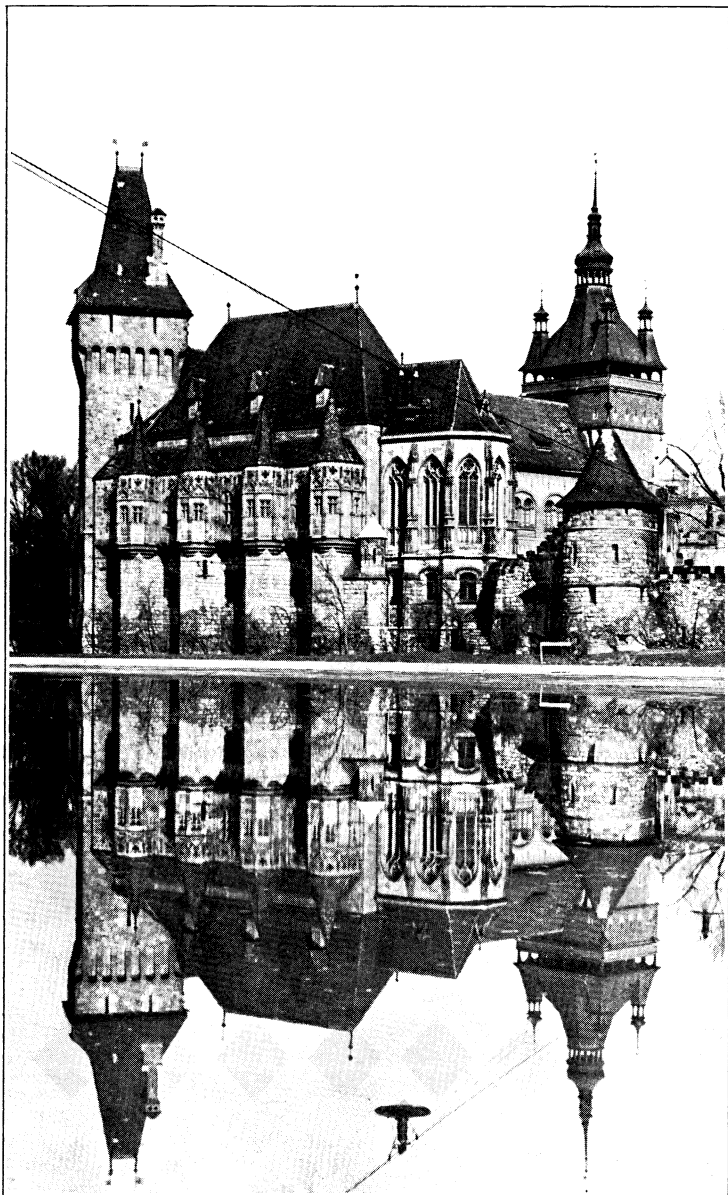


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

MUSEUM OF AGRICULTURE, BUDAPEST

to pour over the resultant building a shimmering substance of fairylike charm.

The people who built the Budapest Agricultural Museum followed this recipe with care. They copied actual buildings—such as the façade of Ják and a wing of the Hunyadi Castle, *Vajdahunyard*—and, contrary to all expectations, produced a building in which harmony of outline and beauty of ensemble are wonderfully blended. I agree with you that it would seem difficult to make anything but a mess out of a structure embodying four distinct architectural styles; yet, here, the seemingly impossible has been achieved. If you do not believe me, fly over one afternoon and see for yourself. The return journey takes but a matter of twenty-four hours!

Sunday is the best day on which to visit the museum. The exhibits within, and the view outside, the building are no better than on a weekday. But of a Sabbath, the people are in the park, many thousands of them, congregated about the lake and the museum. Most of the people do not know the difference between Gothic and Guatemalan; yet they are all pressed together close to Castle *Vajdahunyard*. Why? Because backed against one of the castle walls which is on dry land is a covered motor lorry; and in that motor lorry is a Phillips' Radio Receiving Set, drinking in from Budapest Central Broadcasting Station and spraying out so fast as it can jazz tunes.

The scene is amusing; redeemed from being beastly by the expression of naïve enthusiasm always to be found on the face of a Hungarian

crowd. This particular crowd, listening to the jazz tunes being transmitted to the most remote corners of the lake by means of giant loud-speakers, is hard-up, well dressed in European clothes, and has something rhapsodic about the light in its dark eyes and the chatter issuing from its vivid mouth. Hungary has always been rather behind the rest of Europe in the matter of architectural styles (though the Museum in the park is an exception), and the same thing applies where dance music is concerned. So do not be surprised if you hear something like this floating across the air:

“Ah’m singin’ in the ren’, just singin’ in the ren’,
It’s a wahnderfool feelin’, Ah’m happee agen’ . . .”

That is merely the slightly arrested wave of American culture making itself felt in the backwater of Europe, Budapest.

At first you will feel furious. Jazz, unadulterated! On Sunday, too! And in the park of all places, where the air looks as well as feels marvelous. But then an amusing view of the business comes to you. What an awful liar the singing-person is! He may be singing; may even be happy (though one doubts it); but one thing is quite certain, there is no rain here in Budapest in the Város Liget. Here, there is nothing but a superbly still, artificial lake, mirroring a sky that is so blue and hot and cloudless that the eyes become blind from looking at it. Rain, such a thing can never have been seen in Budapest! It never rains there: it

would not be right to do so. And then you look again at the working-class crowd, and you understand from the smartness of their clothes, and the rather hungry gleam in their eyes, that they are very, very poor. And you suddenly realize that you are only a visitor to Budapest, and that the fact of these people listening to jazz in the shadow of a very fine imitation Gothic castle has got nothing whatsoever to do with you. And in any case, you tell yourself (or, if you do not, you certainly should), jazz is not less amusing than the people who spout in Hyde Park, London, of a Sunday.

So you walk on for a few minutes until you come to the two most lovely things in the park: the small pavilion in which the Horticultural Society hold its exhibitions; and the huge, bronze figure of the anonymous diarist. As a piece of architecture, the pavilion is unimportant, but when you go inside you are in an atmosphere of rich beauty. Dahlias, gladioli, carnations, roses, sunflowers and others whose names I do not know are there. The white-washed walls are a perfect background for the flowers. Huge and languorously coloured blossoms. A giant dahlia, cross between lime and sulphur-yellow, is next to a rose that is like a tall, dusky woman with an exquisite dark head drooping slightly on a fragile, moulded neck. The colouring of the rose, deepest imaginable crimson, powdered over with a dusk shade of darkness, and the indescribably lovely perfume, heighten the image of a mysterious woman, a person who has known much about many sides of life . . . I can recommend

this pavilion. It is nearly always empty; is both soothing and stimulating.

The unknown diarist, chronicler *glorissimi Bélae Regis*, is the work of a sculptor called Ligeti Miklos, still (thank God) living. Much of the statuary in Budapest is almost as bad as that in London; but this particular work of Ligeti's is, I think, better than anything we have here.

The scribe, an immense hooded and cowed figure, the face, fallen forward as if in sleep, almost obscured by the cowl, lolls on a stone bench, the right hand, just gripping a pencil, trailing over an arm of the bench in the way that men's arms trail over the backs of chairs in restaurants, the left arm resting on a massive diary. The bronze legs, under the folds of a magnificently wrought habit, are crossed. The man is sleeping after hard effort.

The reign of King Béla the most glorious (Béla IV) was not an easy one for the chronicler to edit. There was so much in it, such a diversity of characteristics. King Andrew II, Béla's father, had from a reigning point of view made a failure of his job. He began badly and ended worse. In 1224, eleven years before his death, Andrew was forced by public opinion to sign the Golden Bull, a charter corresponding to the Magna Charta, wherein he promised that the abuses of the sovereign, which for some time past had been the cause of civil strife, would be discontinued. The promises were broken, and the nation split into two parties: the King and the people against the Great Lords, including the heir to the

throne, Béla. There is something very attractive about Béla IV. He came to the throne a young man, determined to have his own way, quite certain that it was the only possible way. The first thing to be done, of course, was to decide who should rule, the King or the Great Lords. Béla naturally thought that the power should be in his hands, and in order to obtain it he threw out from the court the counsellors who had influenced his father. The lords disliked this immensely, and in retaliation they attempted to put a foreigner, Duke Frederic of Austria, on the throne. Béla, though, was cleverer than his enemies; he frustrated the scheme and drove out Frederic from Hungary. But, even after this triumph, his position remained unpleasantly insecure. He needed allies against the lords.

Dominican monks, returning at that time from the Volga regions, spoke of having met that fraction of the Hungarians which, before the occupation of Hungary, had drifted away from the main tribe. This was excellent—here were the very people he was seeking! But he did not find them. The Mongols, marching from out of Asia against Europe, encountered the Hungarian fraction living on the banks of the Volga. The Mongols swept on, swept the fraction out of existence. This was a serious blow to Béla, for those Hungarians would have fitted very nicely into the force which he was drawing up against his rebellious nobles. But the Mongol flood dislodged more than one stone. By it, the Kuns, living close to the

Black Sea, had been driven from their home. For a time they wandered fugitive, eventually crossing the Carpathians and coming to the borders of Hungary, where they begged the right to enter the country and settle. Béla was delighted to accede to their petition, for by doing so he gained 40,000 fierce warriors to oppose to the lords.

Unfortunately, the scheme did not work well. The Kuns behaved badly, and complaints of their conduct reached the King from all sides. The quarrel between the King and the nobles grew worse, reaching its crisis in 1241, when, at the approach of the Mongol army, the appeal for loyalty from the sovereign to the lords was rejected, and Béla was recommended to apply to his Kuns for help.

It is a boast in Hungary—a just and proud boast—that since the dawn of its christianity that country has stood between Europe and the danger from the East. King Béla's resistance to the Mongols was a good example of Hungary in her appointed rôle.

Béla could find few of his own nobles to battle with him against the approaching enemy, and the rest of Europe seemed peculiarly uninterested—so long, of course, as Hungary was between them and the danger. The army of 50,000 which Béla managed to put into the field was overcome by sheer force of numbers, and the whole of Hungary was desolated. But the rest of Europe was saved, even from inconvenience. For it takes time to raze a country to the ground; time and much expenditure of energy and men.

In the extreme misery of the nation, Béla showed himself at his best. After the Mongolian disaster, Hungary was in a condition of such devastation as one can imagine only by reading of the appalling awfulness which the next European war is going to produce. Famine, a complete lack of ready money, and a decimated population were the most immediate evils. To counteract them, the King procured from other countries corn, credit, and colonists. The possibility (which in Hungary was nearly always probability) of another attack from the East was reckoned with, and existing towns were re-walled and fortified, and new fortresses were put up at strategic points throughout the land. Five years after the Mongolian plague, Hungary was very nearly herself again, and Béla was already making plans for a new war in which, this time, he should be the aggressor. . . .

But it is a long way from the statue of the unknown diarist in the Város Liget back to the Pest of King Béla's time. And there is a loud speaker concealed not a thousand miles from where you are standing. That loud speaker is very distracting: it keeps on repeating:

“Ah'm singin' in the ren', just singin' in the ren' . . .”

Which, of course, is quite incorrect. What the voice really means is that it is singing in the reign—of Béla the fourth, the most glorious, who fought the Mongols, so that Europe should be safe and the wireless industry flourishing.

As a park, the Város Liget is for the most part too formal to suit my taste. There are walks and lawns and flower beds and pavilions and fountains in plenty; and as well, scattered here and there, and looking strangely out of place in the midst of so much carefully cultivated beauty, there are great trees, lindens, oaks, and chestnuts. The lawns and flower beds are attractive; stretches of rich grass, looking as though each blade had been personally watered, barbered and rolled, the sweep of them broken at regular intervals by patches of startling red and pale gold cannae. Attractive, I repeat, but with something of the cosmopolitan neatness of the tailored suits worn by the crowd; with not enough open space, where the grass is rather tufty, burnt and irregular, to make it worth one's while to leave the broad paths and seek a piece of unvaleted solitude. Which accounts for one's almost breathless joy when, after passing by the Zoological Gardens, and the Széchenyi Baths, with their ultra-perfect, super-modern dry, hot, steam and massage rooms, one comes to a part of the park where the gravelled paths and the lawns and flower beds fade away rapidly, giving place to a common-like stretch of land, dotted sparsely with benches and bushes. This far, the working-class crowd has not penetrated; here are to be found but a few peasants, up from the country and in country dress, sitting, tonguetied, brown and hot, in great proximity to one another.

Wandering through Hungary, one sees much of the peasants; too much, perhaps, to appreciate them

at their full worth. It is when one comes across them in places like the Város Liget, tucked away by themselves, not sufficiently smart to mix with the crowd, not, as it happens, particularly wishing to do so, that one is reminded of their solid worth. And when one thinks of that worth, and looks at their dumb proximity, notices, because of their silence, the quality of their eyes, then one must think of the cornlands which do go so very far towards supporting the capital.

It is easy to spend a whole afternoon in the Város Liget, and it may well be dark by the time one leaves the park. The simplest way back to the hotel is to take a taxi or bus and drive up Andrásy Út; but it is more worth while to cut through from the park on to the embankment, emerging from drab streets at a point upstream from the Houses of Parliament. Here it is quiet and cool. The riverside is but sparsely lighted, and the Danube flows fast and black. Downstream, the lights of Buda are multitudinous but faint. Silhouetted against the sky, the spires of Parliament stand out fine and delicate. The road is broad and empty; but stray couples stand close in the shadows on the footpaths. Though the air is still, the quick, faint ripple of the river is audible. Here, on the embankment, one has a sense of well-being, of quiet affection for the lovers, of fondness for the city in the distance. And, even while feeling serene, one has the sudden, insane desire to leap from the embankment into dark water, which shall carry one downstream past golden Budapest, out of Hungary, through Jugo-

slavia into Roumania, whence it will transport one to the Black Sea, from where it is possible to navigate the waters of the world.

The Hungarian Houses of Parliament should be looked at after dark. Seen by daylight, the buildings do justice neither to themselves, nor to their architect, Imre Steindl, nor to their English namesake, which they are said to resemble. Regarding them close to, as the sun beats down on their roofs and our heads, even if we remember that they were built to be the meeting-place of the representatives of a Hungary three times the size of the present, post-War land, we are apt to think that they are exaggerated. There are so many spires and domes and Gothic windows as to baffle us; and what from a distance was wonderful is now, examined in detail, overpowering and ostentatious. But at night everything is different. Then, there is in the sky a soft warmth of colouring which tones down the new, lifeless character of the stone. And a ripe moon, lying low and gently gilding the lower levels, makes visible the shrouded strength of the whole, vast pile. Now you have something suggestive of the sheer human force that has gone to procure for Hungary, even when the future was most obscure, her continued national existence.

If it is Sunday, you may wish to go to church before eating your dinner. Unfortunately, if I am to be honest, I must say that most of the churches in Budapest are disappointing. The Coronation Church in Buda is beautiful in parts; the St. Stephen Basilica in Pest is tremendous and not in the least

lovely; and the church of the Franciscans, at the corner of Apponyi Tér and Egyetem Utca, which has a great reputation, is, I consider, not even attractive. Perhaps the most satisfying church in the capital is that of the University, at the end of Egyetem Utca. It is a baroque building, and therefore may not please every taste; but it is a genuine, untouched piece of representative architecture. Of its type, rich and full of movement, the interior of the University Church is magnificent; and the music, almost needless to say, is superb.

From the University Church, it is again an easy matter to get to the river, which is always worth being beside; and, walking along the embankment towards the Dunapalota, one passes Petöfi Tér, in which stands a fine statue of the poet. It is hard to say which is the most frequently heard name in Hungary, Petöfi, or Matthyas Corvinus, or John Hunyadi; but it is certain that the poet's is among the first three. Apart from his writings, Petöfi had so much to endear him to the heart of the nation. He was handsome, a raging patriot, and reckless in his courage; and, as well, he had the qualities of a lover. He was in the movement, the great drive for national liberty. Born in 1822, he died at the age of twenty-six, fighting against the Austrians and the Russians.

The early years of Petöfi were not suggestive of the great things he was later to do. At school, he was mediocre; and, as a young man, his successive careers on the stage and in the army showed him to be nothing much more than a pleasant youth with

a vein of something curiously like instability running through his character. But during the years of his wandering life, he was learning to know well his Hungary. Coming eventually to Budapest, he found in Vörösmarty, the national poet, a friend who soon procured a hearing for his protégé.

Had he lived, there is little doubt that Petöfi would have had a European reputation. As it is, I imagine that he shares with St. Imre the distinction of being the greatest animator of the enthusiasm of Hungarian youth, which cannot forget his finest words:

“Arise, O Magyar! Thy country calls.
Here is the time. Now or never.
Shall we be slaves or free?
That is the question. Choose.
We swear by the God of the Magyars,
We swear to be slaves no longer.”

Those words were written on the occasion of the bloodless revolution of Budapest in 1848. It is not possible for me even to suggest how great is their tonic-influence to-day, when Hungary is still suffering from the effects of post-War horrors.

If you stop for a moment to look at the statue of the great Hungarian poet, you will not, I fancy, feel inclined to dine in your hotel when you arrive there a few minutes later. There is something about the notion of Petöfi which makes it impossible for a while to enjoy the wealthy cosmopolitanism of the Dunapalota. The soft carpets and high, domed ceiling of the vestibule, sprinkled with people having

not much else to recommend them other than their money, are for the time being nauseating. And the glimpses which you catch through wide doorways of the large *salle à manger*, decorated with crystal chandeliers, rose-pink lampshades, an American band, and waiters looking like chorus-men in a revue with a Ruritanian setting, are equally dispiriting. So, if you will simultaneously take my advice and a taxi, you will very shortly find yourself across the Danube and travelling along a rather dark, but pleasantly spacious street towards the *Alte Nüssbaum*, the most entirely delightful restaurant in the whole of Budapest.

Here, also, you will find cosmopolitanism—it is impossible to escape it in the capital—but it is neither so obviously nor so uninterestingly wealthy as that at the Dunapalota. Here—sitting at a small table in the open air, your feet resting on rich gravel, your ears being delighted by the fiddle of one of the most famous Tsigane leaders in the whole of Hungary, the air soft with the smell of leaves—you can see from time to time most of the interesting people who are staying or living in Budapest. From Czecho-Slovakia there is the charming and beautiful Princess A; from the United States of America fair-haired Miss Cinema Star, prettier (if possible) off than on the screen; from the same club in Pest, the Hungarian writer who makes so much money in Hollywood and the genial, Italian-looking Transylvanian singer whose voice is the most perfect thing at the Royal Opera; from England, a stray, but by no means negligible, author; from the vari-

ous other corners of the earth, variously interesting people. Sooner or later, they all come to the *Alte Nüssbaum*, where the wine is good, the company better, and one's dreams the best thing of all. It is very easy to dream here, among the trees and the celebrities, while one drinks quantities of white table-wine and listens to music which is even more stimulating. Very easy to dream away the best part of an evening.

But while it is still Sunday, so that you marvel joyfully at the animation of the crowds in the streets, you should get into a taxi and drive for more than a mile parallel to the Danube, till you come to Hunyadi-János Utca, up whose winding slope you climb, passing through quiet Disz Tér, Fortuna Utca, and Holy Trinity Square, from out of which you approach the Old Vienna Wall. Here you must pay off your cab and look a while at the night. You are standing fairly high up, and below you at the end of a strangely unformed, almost colonial, road lies a low level of Buda that stretches away for miles, a haze of lights, into the shadow of the hills. At your left hand is the remnant of the old wall, bricks and mortar having the very perfume of antiquity. Across the river, to your right, is Pest, modern even from here. Long ago there was a gateway where you are standing, and through it marched the Corvin's troops. Above your head, the sky is more magnificent here than from any other vantage-point in the city. Green and purple fringe one another, and the stars are large and tinged with the mixture of both colours.

Near the bottom of the hill at whose head you are standing is a small, a very small, restaurant. It is called, if I remember rightly, the "Transylvania". You should go to this place for your supper. The whole way down the hill, the view of the sky is glorious; and when you are inside the restaurant you are brought back to earth by the smell of the Transylvanian dishes which are being cooked by the enormously fat proprietress until well into the small hours of the morning. These dishes are simple, but *very* good: soup made from quantities of vegetables, thick and devoid of all fat; grilled meats served on thick, wooden platters and in such profusion as to make you imagine yourself a butcher; with the meat, more vegetables, and a salad of green Paprika, cut into strips, that is deliciously hot; for sweet, long, hollow, lightly cooked doughnuts served with a magnificently coloured, sweet crimson sauce. To wash down the food a light and excellent ale served with basketsful of fresh, coarse brown bread cut into man-sized hunks. At the end, coffee magnificently strong. A good meal, and cheap. If ever you are hard up in Budapest, go to the "Transylvania" for your meals. You will not want more than two a day.

It will be late on Sunday evening—no, early on Monday morning by the time that you have finished supper, but the crowds are still thick as you return to Pest and the luxury of your bedroom. Gay crowds, good crowds, crowds that rejoice the hearts of foreigners like myself. It is Sunday night or

Monday morning, and the people are not in their beds. But they will be at work in the morning when we are not yet awake. One is made to feel ashamed by the people of Budapest—by their capacity for life—but one is able to love them well for all that.



Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

PEASANT GIRL IN NATIONAL DRESS. CARRYING LINEN CHEST

CHAPTER XV

THREE EXCURSIONS

NO visitor to Budapest will have time or inclination to undertake the hundred and one excursions mentioned in the official guide-books, pamphlets, and brochures that are so freely distributed in the streets and hotel bureaux. But the three places of which I write in this chapter should not be missed, for each one of them, in its own way, helps one to have an appreciation of Hungary as a whole.

In the village of Mezökövesd, a comfortable hundred and fifty kilometres by one of the fastest expresses north-west of the capital, are to be seen the whole year round the national dresses which in other parts of the country are worn only on very special occasions. The garments are brilliant in the extreme, and the peasants who wear them are among the most handsome in the land.

The country between Mezökövesd and Budapest is unlike any to be seen in other parts of Hungary. Quarter of an hour after leaving the Keleti station, the train runs through a landscape which, with its patches of scrubby, pinched soil, is more like the back-block territory of some new and fabulously

potential colony than the scenery of Central Europe. To the right of the line are peasant holdings, small, diversely sown strips; while later on, to the left, spreading fields of corn fade back into the subtle, blue-grey shadows of the mountains of the Mátra.

The best day to visit Mezökövesd is Sunday, when the village, predominantly catholic, attends one or the other of the three Masses. Of the three, I like best the one starting at nine-thirty, which is celebrated specially for the children. Though the church is large, with many galleries and side chapels, it is difficult to find a place to sit or kneel when all the children are assembled. Their clothes are very lovely, and they wear them well. And, with the best intentions in the world, it is difficult to concentrate in the midst of such attractive surroundings.

In Mezökövesd, a small girl is very much of a great lady to behold. The three worked petticoats which she wears under her magnificently embroidered skirt are not sufficient to spoil the line of her slim little body. Over the skirt is an apron, embroidered with tulips and other flowers in vivid shades of orange, scarlet, and beetle-wing green. A short bodice, with abbreviated, puffed sleeves, and the chest and back covered with flower designs in lighter colours than the apron or skirt, fits closely round the neck, covers the strings of the apron, and shows off perfectly the exquisitely moulded, light-brown arms. About her neck, closely fitting too, hang rows of those silvery beads which look so brilliant in the windows of a Woolworth shop. The hair, combed

back flat off the forehead, is done in two plaits which hang down the back. And the eyes and brows, thrown into greater relief by the severe *coiffeur*, are brilliantly dark, slightly aslant, and exceedingly fine.

Small boys in the congregation of children wear a dress almost as elaborate as their sister's. Up to the age of twelve, when he goes into the emancipated and (in Mezökövesd) enormous pantaloons of manhood, the boy wears a skirt of pleated, white linen, embroidered around the hem with fuchsia red linen thread. This skirt is gathered in at the waist, and the bunch of pleats is masked by a flowing smock, fitting closely at the neck. Over all, rather sombrely embroidered, holding everything together, is the apron without which no self-respecting peasant considers himself dressed.

What a delightful thing is the Sunday children's Mass in this church, crammed full and overflowing with small peasant boys and girls! The colourings of the dresses—so brilliant—throw into relief the darkest corners of the church; the pale brown, oval slenderness of faces; the fine modelling of arms. The children behave extremely well when they are kneeling or sitting, but when they rise to sing a hymn behaviour is forgotten in sudden spontaneous emotion. The hymns are different from the treble tunes which children in England sing; for in them there is a depth of tone, a warmth and ecstasy, a passionate sincerity, that cause one first to think of dim and past battles in the history of the Magyars and then to rise to one's feet and, knowing not one

word, join in, hot and reckless. This, one feels, is music that God must hugely enjoy.

The Sung Mass for the elders is a magnificent ceremony: something which, you would think, could not be seen off the stage at Bayreuth. Colour—brilliant but not harsh—from the dresses of the younger women who kneel in the aisles and in front of the altar rails. Character in the deep-sculped faces of old men and coiffed women. And, over all, the nebulousness of incense, which, floating upwards, is like the most filmy gauze curtain that rises so imperceptibly as to leave one wondering whether it was ever really there.

The skirt, petticoats and apron of the young women are the same as those of the small girls, but the head-dress is uniquely magnificent. The foundation of this head-dress is a sort of veil, embroidered with red and gold tulips, bound round the head, completely concealing the hair. Over the veil comes a head-shawl, lavishly embroidered and heavily fringed with fluffy carmine, gold and emerald-green wool. If it be cold, or if she wishes to wear yet more colour, a young woman dons a body-shawl of green and orange and carmine, the same as the fringe of her head-shawl, which she twists about her shoulders in a deliciously alluring manner.

All women wear a head-covering of some sort in church, but otherwise only the unmarried veil their hair.

At first sight, a man's dress is not so very different from what he wore as a boy. The pantaloons which he now wears are so voluminous as to bear a marked

resemblance to his skirt of old. But they *are* pantaloons, as can be seen by looking at models in the museum, even though twelve metres of linen have gone to their making. The shirt, with its tremendously wide, lace-frilled sleeves, is richly pleated, and the apron covering the join of the shirt and the pantaloons is worked in the usual tulip design. Over the shirt the man wears an abbreviated black coat like an Eton jacket, open in front and embroidered with the same pattern as the apron. On his head (though not in church) is perched a small, round, green and black hat, with pheasant feathers sticking up behind. While on his feet (though you can only see the polished tips of them projecting from under the pantaloons) are the tall black boots worn in all parts of the country.

At High Mass, the young men and women are packed close together in side chapels, aisles, and at the altar rails. Old women, dressed from head to foot in long, shiny, robe-like black skirts, with yellow sagging faces that make one strangely sad to see, are together in the close line of benches to the left of the central aisle. And older men, wrinkled, grizzled, humble, attentive, sit—with rather bowed heads—in the benches to the right. The music of the hymns is deeper than when the children sang, much more intense. There is something harsh, agonized, in its tone, as if the singers who were grown to maturity were delving down into themselves in order, at this Mass, to give vent to the tremendous, yet normally dumb, feelings of their class.

VISEGRÁD

If you come into Hungary by boat you will pass Visegrád at a point, some two hours west of Budapest, where the river runs very fast and silent and, for the Danube, narrow; where the mountains of Buda are more than respectably high to the right of you, and the foothills of the Tátra to the left are higher still; where the sky, between the uprising rocks on each side of the river, is a strip either of sheer blue or misty grey. You will notice a ruin crowning the peak of a tall hill to your right; and you will have forgotten, so soon as you have been told, that this is Visegrád. Forgotten, that is, unless you happen to know that the name of Matthyas Corvinus is bound up in an unbreakable tradition with the ruin of Visegrád.

Even if you know all about King Matthyas, you will be unable to go ashore, for the express boats from Vienna do not stop long at Visegrád. So the only thing to be done is to go on to Budapest and return later by train, which is a simple matter of two hours and seven *pengös* for the return journey.

At the foot of the hill which you must climb to reach the ruin are the remains of the tower wherein King Ladislaus, later to become the second saint of the Arpád dynasty, imprisoned his cousin, Solomon, a pretender to the throne. The tower might still be beautiful, were it not that it was allowed so far to decay that its ultimate restoration was not so much a strengthening and refurbishing as a complete rebuilding. The climb round the face of the hill is

hard work, but the beeches and oaks through which one toils smell cool and earthy, and the view of the village of Nagy Maros across the river and of the high mountains of the Tátra looming up remotely in the background like pale, grey veils, is alone well worth the trouble.

The palace ruin strikes an immediate note :

“All the pomps of yesterday
Are one with Nineveh and Tyre.”

A few loosely strung together walls, with an occasional window still unmistakably Gothic, a Romanesque doorway leading into what was once the private chapel of Royalty, the whole pile a grey and sombrely incomplete ruin . . . here is all that remains of what was once the most brilliant court of fifteenth century Europe.

King Matthyas was the perfect type of the Renaissance: a lavish, generous, acquisitive, profoundly appreciative man. Writing of him and of his court of Visegrád, George Birmingham has the following excellent description: *

He made the Palace of Visegrád an “earthly paradise” and “the centre of the universe” in the opinion of his contemporaries. He certainly made it a very splendid place. There were hanging gardens, marble fountains, statues everywhere—the Hungarians still love statues more than most people do—and frescoes of which Fra Lippo Lippi is said to have supervised the painting. In Buda he established a library which was famous in its day, and might be famous still if the Turks had not destroyed it. . . . He established two universities and

* *A Wayfarer in Hungary.*

many schools. He encouraged building, and a few of his churches survive. Little or nothing else does; the Turks saw to that. His art, his learning, his culture vanished as completely as the splendour of his pageantries, leaving nothing but memories behind.

At his court in Visegrád he gathered round him a crowd of nobles and prelates, many of them generously paid, all of them, we may suppose, fed and clothed. Their business was to act the part of supers in the splendid displays which Matthyas organized. The reception of an ambassador from a foreign power was one of the opportunities he liked to use . . .

There was probably more in these performances than a childish love of display. Matthyas, though he loved pageantry, was himself a man of simple habits. He probably understood very well the political value of splendour. A simple-minded ambassador might be reduced to a condition of stammering incoherence by the grandeur of the King. There was an envoy of the Sultan's whom Matthyas received in Visegrád. When the doors of the Palace were thrown open, the Sultan's messenger beheld the King standing above him in one of the hanging gardens. In groups around the King and above him were the courtiers and nobles wearing the most splendid imaginable clothes, carrying glittering arms and all the paraphernalia of a really well-staged pantomime. The envoy was almost struck dumb. All he could manage to say was: "The Padisha greets you. The Padisha greets you." It took him several days to recover from his stupor, and when he was again led into the King's presence we may suppose that he was in a mood in which it was fairly easy to deal with him.

Matthyas was a great man, and to-day he is dust. Dust, too, is all of the magnificence and much of the beauty for which he was responsible. You climb the hill to the remains of the Palace of Visegrád, and of

that palace you find little. Some few loosely knit walls, a rare, still very lovely window-frame, an arch or two. The gold and silver and books and jewels are gone, stolen, destroyed, cast out by the Turks. In their place can be seen a beer-bottle, some cigarette ends, scraps of greasy paper that once held sandwiches perfumed with Salami. An occasional couple make love in the depths of the chapel, where envoys from the Popes celebrated the Sacrifice of the Mass on an altar of marble. Straggling ravens, black and brilliant, hungry and alert, swoop from the sky to peck at the garbage of trippers.

Tiring of decay, you stroll to the edge of the cliff and look down at the Danube and at the misty hills on its opposite side. The river is narrow, like silver-grey satin ribbon; and rising up from it a deeper, more substantial grey, the hills mock at you :

“We have forgotten more than the whole world knows.”

ESTERGOM

Estergom, a few kilometres further upstream towards Vienna than Visegrád, is easily reached by train from Budapest. In the earliest days of the Arpáds, Estergom was the capital of Hungary; but it has an even greater hold on the imagination and affection of Magyars through its association with Stephen, first king and saint of Hungary.

Of relics of its days as a capital and the birth-place of the great King there are few. But in the treasury of the cathedral of the Prince Primate of

Hungary, whose seat this is, there are examples of ecclesiastical art which, were Hungary so well known as she deserves to be, would to-day be sought after by the representatives of all the great collections of the world.

By far the most interesting of these treasures are those which had their origin in Transylvania, once the apple of the Hungarian national eye, now, since Trianon, its most desperately mourned loss. The reason why the Transylvanian treasures are so intensely interesting is that that part of the world is the last in which one would have expected an art of any description whatsoever to flourish. It is true that Transylvania has always been rich in the raw materials of gold and silver, from which objects might be fashioned; but who could imagine that a people such as the earliest Magyars, fierce nomads from Central Asia, would have had either the inclination or the opportunity to indulge in such fashioning? Coming from the East at the close of the ninth century, crossing the great range of the Carpathians and settling in Transylvania, these early Magyars found themselves in a land where, though perfecting sunshine and glittering snow alternated most beautifully and harmoniously, roebuck and stag did not lie down and cook themselves whenever a Magyar felt hungry, and where unsown corn did not grow simply because there happened to be a good growing season. In the same way, birds did not get themselves shot on the pine-clad hills, nor fish caught in the pools and streams, nor sheep sheared and their wool made into warm clothes. Similarly, though

they lay latent in the depths of majestic mountains, gold and silver and turquoise, which stone above all others characterizes Transylvanian jewelled *objets d'art*, did not erupt suddenly in a cascade of raw, yet pliable, beauty, ready to the hand of the possible craftsman. This new world, in a word, though full of visible, natural beauty and hidden mineral wealth, was not an easy one to inhabit. Before thinking of such things as chalices, monstrances, sacred sculptures, vestments, or tabernacles, those early settlers must first devise a means of slaughtering the roebuck, stag, fish, and birds on which they relied for bodily food; and, secondly, they must find a way of guarding that body from the persistent dangers of bear and wolf which also were hungry from time to time.

It was a primitive existence that those people lived, one in which food, warmth, safety from wild animals and even wilder human foes, and the begetting of children were the only considerations.

Then, at the close of the tenth century, was born Stephen, son of Geyza, who was baptized by Saint Adalbert and who was responsible for the general spread of Christianity throughout Hungary. The change over from the worship of Isten, the supreme, and his kindred and lesser spirits, the gods of the mountains, woods, springs, and rivers was not easily accomplished in greater Hungary; still less easily was it effected in the distant province of Transylvania, where even to-day one is influenced by the sudden emotional appeal of green, needle-like pine leaves; thin, rushing streams of water; vast, shadowy

mountains, broad, girdled plains, and a sunset and moonrise whose brilliance and proximity to the earth are breath-taking. Indeed, it was long before the influence of Stephen filtered through to the land beyond the woods; and when at last the wish of the King was known, not a few of his missionaries died at the hands of those subjects who inhabited the fringe of the kingdom. Stephen, though, eventually won, and Isten and his brethren were renounced in favour of the New God.

By their adoption of Christianity, the Magyars of Transylvania renounced, not only their pagan gods, but as well many of their habitual customs and practices; and this renunciation was strengthened by association with the ever-increasing foreign element which was flooding the country as a result of the number of captives brought by the Hungarians from other parts of Europe. These captives, many of whom were of noble birth, by association with high and low in the ranks of the captors, wielded an extraordinary influence over the naïve Magyars, who were only too delighted to adopt their manner of dressing and praying, their taste in food and drink. It took two and a half centuries to impregnate the wanderers of the Central-Asian steppes with the germ of Western Christianity; and, at the end of that time, if the Hungarian nation as a whole was as fiercely Christian as formerly it had been savagely pagan, the Transylvanian branch retained very fully the passionate desire for life that had been bred and fostered by early struggles to preserve it.

This quality of passionate vitality is to be seen

in most of the works of Transylvanian art that have survived the strife and struggle of civil war, Turkish invasion, and Roumanian, post-Trianon indifference. And it is this strong sense of enthusiasm which gives to Transylvanian art—as to Hungarian national life in general—its wellnigh unique beauty.

In the treasury of the cathedral at Estergom there are chalices and monstrances of Transylvanian work that are lovely indeed. The form is more or less conventional, Gothic, introduced by missionaries from Bavaria or some country even further west, but the ornamentation of this form is entirely characteristic of those most eastern Magyars in whose ancient hands a lump of raw gold took on the shape of a sacred vessel. "This," one can imagine a missionary explaining to one of the early Magyars, "this is the shape—so! You must form the cup—so." And the workman would do as he was bidden. "But this," he would announce, producing the finished article, jewelled, enamelled, and wrought about with a fine golden filigree, "this is the way I adorn," and the missionary from abroad would take the chalice in his hands, as you may not do at Estergom, turn it round and hold it up to the light, and gaze in bewilderment at a vessel made according to his formulated measurements, but with the lines of those measurements enriched beyond thought by the pattern of the workman's imaginings. Not on the gold of this chalice the fine-graven lines that the instructor had been able to approve, but a symbolization of the erect pine-needles, the crystal streams, the snow-peaked Carpathians, the violently clear

blue sky that are an intrinsic part of the Transylvanian Hungarian.

To-day, Hungary has lost Transylvania, and under its new rulers that province is finding it hard indeed to keep alive any sort of national consciousness whatsoever, let alone an individual section of the Hungarian national art and culture. Hungarians in Transylvania with whom I have spoken have assured me repeatedly that they and their fellows are being crushed, both mentally and physically, by the new regime. And with these statements, from what I personally have seen, I can thoroughly agree. But about Transylvania, and the Transylvanian Magyars who inhabit it, there is a tremendous resilience, an ungauged reserve of passionate animation that will keep them going until conditions change—as they inevitably must—either for complete and speedy annihilation or for the better.

This passionate virility, which will, please God, preserve a large section of a proud nation, can be seen in the treasures of the cathedral at Estergom; which is my simultaneous reason for writing of the place and urging any new-comer to Hungary to visit it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LOWLAND

ROUGHLY speaking, the Alföld, or Hungarian Lowland, extends from the Danube across the whole of Eastern Hungary to the new Roumanian frontier. For a short while after leaving Budapest, your international express runs through a disjoint series of suburbs, emerging eventually into indeterminate country fairly liberally besprinkled with trees. After running through this treeland for something like half an hour, the line lies across the Lowland, the most fascinating, the most entirely Hungarian, district in the whole country.

To you, seeing it for the first time, the Alföld cannot fail to be exceedingly lovely; as well, it will seem cruel. There is an absence of those trees that could mar the effect of a motionless sea of corn on a breathless summer day, but the gold of the crop and the unwinking blue of the sky are pitilessly magnificent. There is no suspicion of a breeze; yet, on the horizon, where gold corn and blue sky meet, shadows, definite though faint, dance before your eyes. The sun, directly above the roof of your carriage, is immensely powerful, and its rays pierce through the wood of the compartment and penetrate deep into your consciousness. Hot! Yet look at that pair of brown shepherds, their thick, black hair

powdered with dust, driving a small flock of grey-brown, straggling sheep along a track from which infinitely fine dust sprays upwards in clouds which are instantly dissolved in the air. Hotter, that! The train stops for a while, and you are able to see that the only moisture for miles around is on the sheeps' tongues, which loll despairingly in the corners of their mouths. Once, these tongues were pink, but the saliva on them has attracted and held the dust, so that now they are mud-coloured. The train moves on, and the glare of the corn seems to sear the skin on your face. A tree, what would you not give for sight of a spraying, dark green acacia!

I would advise anyone taking train across the Lowland to book through to Debreczen, which is close to the *Puszta* (plain) of the Hortobágy. The Alföld has changed greatly of recent years, thousands of its square acres having been brought under the plough to cultivation. In the Hortobágy, though, life goes on very much the same as it did ten centuries ago, when there came into the land the first Magyars, a race of fighting nomads who swore by the power of the sword and the speed of a horse. "Get your man", was the watchword of those early Magyars. "But if by any chance you miss your aim, remember that he who fights and runs lives to fight again." To run meant "to horse," and in the Hortobágy, to the present day, horse-breeding has remained the favourite occupation.

There is something different from the rest of the Hungarians about the *Csikós* (horse-herds) of the Hortobágy; an atmosphere of aloofness that has

been bred in them through generations of association with an open piece of territory strangely cut off from the surrounding country-side. Here, on the defensive against the gradual encroachment of agricultural development, the remnant of the earliest Magyar-wanderers lives a life of its own in rude, straw huts. At various points of the plain are a crude species of corral, into which, in times of storm, the horses are driven.

Your *Csikós* is a great man with his horse. Seeing him for the first time, as he leans against the air outside his hut, with his dark blue blouse, and his lighter blue eyes, looking out dreamily from beneath a sweeping black hat, intensified by the sunburnt brown of his face and neck, you would not say him over competent. But watch him, when a line of fine clouds on the horizon threatens storms, astride his own particular animal, thundering in the wake of a mob of half-mad horses, guiding with a flick of his short-handled, long-lashed *Karikás* (whip) this straggler here, that rebel there. The dust from the hoofs of the herd is blinding, yet he sees with ease, and when a rebel breaks away, threatening by his antics to disorganize the mob, out flashes the *Csikós's* lasso, the loop of which, after a preliminary twirl, hisses through the air and coils about the sweating neck of the runaway. That is a sight worth traveling far to watch, and is reminiscent of the days when the horsemen of Hungary wandered far from the plain, into the lands of the unknown in search of spoil of every kind.

Not so very long ago, places like the Hortobágy

were the refuge of those young men who, from ill-fortune rather than studied villainy, had to flee from the police. The innkeepers and the *Csikós* were the friends of these *Szegény-Legény* (unfortunates) and would keep them informed of the movements of the detested *Zsandór* (police). I have never had the good fortune to encounter one of these fugitives, but once, in a small restaurant in Buda, I heard Pallo, the great baritone of the Royal Opera, sing of them. The song started quietly, low and sad, telling of three young *Szegény-Legény* in hiding in an inn remotely situated in a desert part of the *Puszta*. They were sad, for they were discussing a dear leader recently executed. A single candle gutters on the table, and the wine bottles are empty. Outside, the plain is monstrously silent. Suddenly the door bursts open, and a man stamps into the room. It is the dead leader. "Lights!" he calls passionately. "A dozen candles! Wine," roars the man, "a barrel of the finest! Music," he shouts, "Tsigany!" He embraces his friends, and the innkeeper fetches his orders. Soon the room is transformed from a sad, mourning place into a scene of riotous liveliness. Light and wine and song overflow. Until, so suddenly as he came, the leader vanishes from the room, and his friends are left to mourn a wraith.

Delibáb! Fata Morgana! Will o' the Wisp!
The Haunting Spirit of the Great Plain.

Delibáb (according to the legend) was the daughter of King Rad, an ugly old man with a red beard, who once upon a time captured the province of Panonia. Wishing to extend his kingdom, Rad

made an alliance with Csörsz, ruler of a people dwelling near to the banks of the river Tisza, who was young and wondrously handsome, and who loved madly the fair Delibáb. King Rad disapproved of the affair, but, not wishing to offend his young ally by a direct refusal, he granted to him his daughter's hand on condition that he should carry Delibáb home by ship across the plain to the Tisza. This was apparently impossible, since there is no water in the plain, and Rad must have felt quite safe.

But Csörsz adored Delibáb—nothing was impossible where she was concerned—and, returning to his kingdom, he ordered every man, woman and child, to set to digging a canal from the Tisza across the plain. Day by day, the canal grew, and every hour brought King Csörsz nearer to his beloved. But the gods were on the side of Rad, for, one day when he was watching the progress of the now almost completed work, Csörsz was struck and killed by lightning. Delibáb, on hearing of the tragedy, died.

To-day, the *Csikós* of the Hortobágy, surrounded by their loneliness, dream much of the beauty of being in love with love. They lean against the air outside their huts, handsome, singing softly of the pain of loneliness that is in their hearts. The air is hot, the sky insanely blue; or the air is cooler, and the sky turning to magic green and purple as the sun fades; and away on the horizon, where the heat-beams shimmer, a lake of gloriously still water has appeared. And over the lake, hovering, exquisitely lovely, is a maiden who would love and be loved.

If a voyager be present with the *Csikós*, that voyager will remark rather scornfully in order to hide his (or her) enthusiasm: "Mirage, seen the same thing dozens of times at Suez." But the *Csikós*, mercifully ignorant of such a place, is not blasé. To him, the lovely maiden is the spirit of Delibáb, who was robbed of her lover by the caprice of the gods. And the lake, the *Csikós* will explain, is formed from the same Delibáb's mourning tears.

The *Csikós* loses interest in the traveller and walks away from him towards the lake, which vanishes—it matters not, for it will appear again—before he has covered half the distance to the horizon.

But the Alföld is changing. Corn, cattle, cars come in; Delibáb is being driven out. I do not know to whom should be credited the direct responsibility for this metamorphosis—it might well be great Stephen Széchenyi, who, by his regulation of the Tisza, gave over to fertility what was formerly a marsh—but whoever it was, the effects are very apparent. Farming is taking the place of horse-breeding, and the descendants of the ancient Magyars must give vent to their predatory instinct by plundering one another's eggs and poultry.

And yet—the Lowland retains an atmosphere. In it, the Orient and the Antipodes are strangely, painfully, beautifully intermingled. Between the Danube and the Tisza, from north to south, stretches this amazing territory, flat and unbroken by any hill, violent in summer, sodden in winter, defiant the whole year round. I used to think that there

could be nothing more mentally numbing than living the whole year round in the shadow of the Tyrolean Alps. I have changed my mind. The Alföld is infinitely more overpowering.

Go through the Lowland and you must remark its first fascination. The fields are enormously large, incredibly fertile. Everything in this part of Hungary produces the impression of hugeness. You drive along a road. It is a broad road, a good road, a road stretching for mile after mile in arrowlike directness. The fields to right and left are great squares, the corn and crops in them luxuriant. The sky above your head is an immense sweep of blue, devoid of a single white fleck. The horizon like that of a limitless ocean. The road stretches ahead, utterly undeviating, uncannily smooth. You ask yourself: is the world really round? And, just as you are answering negatively, something happens to make you change your mind. Out of the heat haze dancing away from the car to the horizon appears a sudden, unrealized, gloriously novel turning. Thanking God for the diversion, you take it, and, after bumping for some minutes over a rutted, clay track, you come to a broad, village-like square, from out of which a driveway, or smaller private road, leads to a longish, low, whitewashed dwelling whose only distinguishing mark from a rather more than usually swagger homestead in the Wanganui or Hawkes Bay districts of New Zealand is the coronet embroidered on the fine, iron, twin gates leading into the courtyard.

Your welcome at such a home of a lowland aris-

toerat, when you have explained that you are a foreigner, who is nearly desperate with fatigue after driving for hours on the straight main road, will be charmingly cordial; and, after you have drunk either tea with rum and lemon, or an excellent white wine, likely as not you will be asked to walk with your host through part of his domain. It may be the gardens, or it may be the corn, that you are invited to inspect. The most interesting thing you can see—and what I shall shortly describe—is the large square through which you approached the house.

In Central Hungary, the estates of the aristocracy are comparatively small—three to five thousand acres—and magnificently productive. In this part of the country, where it is just as impossible as in the back-blocks of New Zealand to send out for a loaf of bread or a pound of butter when supplies run short, the motto is: *Grow Your Own*. Thus the estate is made to produce, not only corn for bread, dairy and garden produce and meat for the table, but as well fuel, ice, and electricity. Independence is the motif, a fitting one since each estate is so very like a small, independent kingdom, of which the farm-yard square is the capital.

This square, situated at a charm-lending distance from the *château*, is a village in itself. The pivot about which the life of the village revolves is the well—a typical characteristic of the great plain—set fair in the centre of the square. Extraordinarily primitive affairs, these wells, consisting of a beam which swings across a tall pole standing over an

opening in the ground. Attached to opposite ends of the beam are a bucket and weight, which balance one another. When the weighted end of the beam is swung towards the sky, the bucket at the other end goes down into the water; and, on the weighted end being pulled back to earth, the bucket, filled with water, rises to the level of troughs into which it is emptied. Right through the day, groups of animals and people are to be seen collected about the well. Horses, oxen, buffaloes, cows, sheep, swine, and an occasional, pariah-like dog slake their dusty thirst at the troughs, what time the drivers, drovers, cowmen, and shepherds chat to one another the significant gossip of the farm. Sometimes a woman strolls across the square, pail in hand, to draw the water which shall swill the kitchen or cook the Paprika stew.

In the tiny, thatched houses lining one side of the square live peasant labourers working on the estate. They are a happy family, for the farmyard supplies all their needs and is a miniature metropolis. On the other three sides of the square are farm-buildings, which shelter the live and dead stock. Here live a great variety of cattle. Hungarian oxen, with marvellously long, upcurving horns, used to draw the plough, placid brutes; Swiss and Dutch oxen, totally devoid of horn, fat and growing fatter in preparation for the beef markets of Vienna, chained to their spotless stalls so that they shall not dissipate one ounce of precious weight; black, nuggety, friendly looking buffaloes, animals with thick, outward-pointing horns, that can pull a loaded wagon

through a sea of mud. Then there are the cows, Dutch, Holstein, or Swiss, which are milked three times daily, and of whose scientifically cooled, carefully bottled milk, every drop which is not used for household purposes is sent off regularly to the neighbouring town.

Nothing is wasted on these smallish estates. In the barns, you will find the sweepings of every crop that has been grown in the fields during the past years. Besides corn, oats, barley, maize, and rye, there are the bi-products of sugar-beet and chaff and maize to be used for the winter fodder of horses, cattle, and pigs.

Among other things, the farmyard is the terminus of the metre-gauge railway which runs from the estate to the nearest railway siding, perhaps ten kilometres distant. The trucks of this farm railway, filled with corn, sugar-beet, turnips, potatoes, or whatever may be in season, are pulled by tough little horses, first cousins of the pit ponies working in mines.

The peasant of the Hungarian Lowland is not brilliant. If it came to a battle of wits, his brothers in the western counties would do him down every time. The explanation of this lack of brilliance lies in the influence of the plain in which the peasant lives. There is a heavy, rolling expansiveness about the Alföld country, suggestive of immense vastness of space and time. Here, time and space are not the rapidly changing, almost priceless commodities that they are in a metropolis. Your Lowland peasant does not take taxis in order to save seconds, nor does



Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

PEASANTS

he pay hundreds, or thousands, of pounds for a foot of land. The only significance that time and space have for him is in their connection with the seasons of the year: when crops are to be sown or reaped, and the number of acres to be ploughed.

But if not brilliant, the mentality of these peasants is exceedingly reliable, and was responsible for the breakdown of the Bolshevism in Hungary.

At a time when the Red regime was at the height of its success, a trifling detail for which that clever villain Béla Kun had made no allowance cropped up. Food supplies in Budapest failed! Blood, banknotes, coins, jewellery, and license littered the streets—but of corn from which to make bread there was a shortage. Kun did not worry greatly. Were not the granaries of the Lowland stacked with grain? And was not Bolshevism the friend of the people? The peasantry, as the Jew-boy dictator in a moment of vision put it, were the backbone of the country. *Bien*, let them come forward and show the stuff of which they were made!

The peasantry showed their quality right enough, but it happened (fortunately for Hungary) to be different from what Béla Kun had expected. He was refused his corn. Kun, mark you, the dictator, the saviour of the land, the man (crowning virtue, this) who was prepared to pay for food with forged banknotes! Where was the shame, one wonders, of these Magyars, who answered the benefactor thus:

“We are sorry, Mr. Kun, but your ways are not ours! Please go!”

Even in the face of such a rebuff, the dictator did not lose hope. Where a call to patriotism had proved unavailing, a little pressure might succeed. Persuasive methods were introduced to the peasantry by Tibor Szamuely, a lieutenant of Kun's, who, with his gang of aptly named "Lenin Boys" and a special armoured train, raced backwards and forwards between the capital and the eastern frontier, letting loose hell wherever he stopped. The methods of this happy little band can best be understood by reading the following paragraph from an article by a Hungarian writer:

The usual custom of these human brutes was to place the victim in a chair beneath the tree selected for the purpose (hanging), then to throw a rope round his neck and order him to kick away the chair. Whenever the victim was unable, owing to his terror of death, to do so, he was beaten with rifle-buttts and prodded with knives, until the instinct of escape from the sanguine torture compelled the writhing victim to comply with the command. These beasts beat grey-haired old men to death; in some cases they gouged out the victim's eyes before killing them with all the refinement of Bolshevik cruelty. In one case, after hanging a man, they forced his wife, who was approaching confinement, to watch her husband's death-agony. They even slapped the faces of the dead and kicked them, using obscene language in their abusive mockery of their victims.

All of which was not only horrible but as well futile. For the corn was not forthcoming. The revolution began to totter on its feet—men, even though they be mad, find it difficult to live down to

Bolshevism when their stomachs are empty, and the approach of the Roumanian and Czech armies from the east and the north respectively turned to a rout what had looked like being the very successful establishment of the Russian Idea in Hungary. Béla Kun, unfortunately, escaped justice; but Tibor Szamuely, fleeing to the Austrian frontier, was seized with panic, and blew out his own brains. His body was buried in unhallowed ground, and his epitaph, *Here perished a dog*, written in pencil on a stone over the grave, is very fitting.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FUTURE

SO soon as one approaches the problem of the future of Hungary, one is up against the Treaty of Trianon, which is responsible for the present most unsatisfactory state of affairs in that country. Before attempting to draw any conclusion as to what Fate may have in store for the Magyar nation, let me say, here and now, that Hungarians to a man are dissatisfied with the workings of the Peace Treaty. As to whether or no Hungarians have any right to be dissatisfied, I will not just yet give an opinion; rather, first, I would prefer to set out what the main causes of this dissatisfaction are.

Before the War, Hungary was, in the opinion of geographers and economists, the perfect geographic and economic unit; a vast, fertile, central plain, surrounded by mountains rich in iron, gold, and silver, and amply productive of coal and timber: a perfect pair of halves, mutually complementary. The plain took from the hills the raw materials of industrial production, giving in exchange the corn and agricultural produce required by the mountain dwellers. Trianon changed all this. North, south, east, and west, limbs were severed from the body of the Old Hungary and given to the Succession States—Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia, and Roumania—even

to Austria, Hungary's ally in that very War for the losing of which she was now being punished.

By this dismemberment, not only were the vitally needed raw materials of manufacturing removed from Hungary's possession, but as well the railways, telegraphic services, navigable rivers and canals of the Old Kingdom were thrown into a state of chaos. Even had the Hungarian factories been able to continue working at full pressure, the placing of the goods on the international market would have been wellnigh impossible, for not only were the rivers and the railways badly interfered with, but as well, Fiume, Hungary's sole means of access to the sea, had been taken away.

It might well be argued that the simplest—the most obvious—course was for Hungary to resign herself to the loss of territory, and to continue to exchange the agricultural products of the plain for the minerals and fuel of the mountain districts. The fact that certain territories had changed hands would not mean that the dwellers in those territories suddenly gave up eating bread or needing coal. Hungary would have been only too delighted to fall in with such an arrangement, I imagine—for, to put it quite crudely, beggars may not be choosers—but unfortunately the Succession States were not agreeable. Rather, girding themselves about with a series of impossible tariff walls, they proceeded economically to isolate Hungary, hoping that in the face of such treatment the country would collapse completely. That Hungary did not collapse is the fault, not of the Succession States nor yet of the

Treaty of Trianon, but rather of the magnificent courage of the nation.

The effects of the stoppage of industry were not long in showing themselves. The crown, which at the end of 1918 had been quoted on the Zürich Exchange at over 39 centimes, collapsed in December, 1920, to just over one centime. The immediate, dire result of such a fall in the currency was a shrinkage in the income of the State. The cost of living soared skywards, and it was found necessary to increase greatly the salaries of all State employees. To make matters worse, many of the State resources—such as the railway and telegraphic services already referred to—were in a wrecked condition, thus producing but a tithe of what might normally have been expected from them. Money had to be found for the repairing of these services, and yet more money was needed for the tremendously increased number of State dependants.

By far the most alarming of these new dependants were the refugees, thousands of whom fled, or were driven, from their homes in the Old Hungary into the new and appallingly poverty-stricken post-War land. As most of these *émigrés* were of the official class, and in consequence quite unfitted for land-work, even had such work been available, it was the most natural thing in the world that they flock to Budapest, where already unemployment and starvation had reached menacing proportions.

Let us now leave for a moment the economic

aspect of the Treaty of Trianon and glance instead at the minority problem raised by it.

By the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost approximately twelve million subjects, the inhabitants of the lost provinces, who were handed over, without any preliminaries, to Czecho-Slovakia, Jugoslavia, Roumania, and Austria respectively. The lot of these expatriated subjects would have been hard enough to bear under the best conditions; under those to which they were actually subjected, life became terribly difficult. The Treaty of Trianon laid down certain regulations whereby it was hoped to preserve the rights of free religious belief and of speech to the minorities, but these regulations have been set at nought by the various ruling bodies. Of the twelve million subjects lost by Hungary, three millions are pure-bred Magyars, and it is on them that the hardships fall heaviest. Hated and feared by their new rulers, since they are a constant reproach to them and an equally constant source of danger owing to their tremendous spiritual ties with Hungary, every agency is invoked to make their lives so miserable that eventually (it is hoped) they will renounce all idea of being repatriated, and will allow themselves to become absorbed into the nationality of their new countries.

The largest and (so far as one can judge) worst treated of these pure-bred Magyar minorities is that which has come under Roumanian rule by Hungary's secession of Transylvania to that country.

The outstanding grievance in Transylvania

to-day is the Agrarian Reform. Originating in the land-hunger of the Russian peasants, the idea of Agrarian Reform spread rapidly throughout Eastern Europe. In pre-War Roumania there was ample justification for such a measure. The land was held by a very small minority of wealthy families, who lived abroad and spent their huge incomes in the pleasure-centres of Western Europe. After the War, the Roumanian peasantry showed strong signs of objecting to such a state of affairs, and, in order to appease them and to obviate the chance of a Bolshevik uprising, the Government decided to institute certain reforms.

In the case of pre-War Roumania, these reforms were necessary, but in the case of the Transylvanian-Magyar landowners they most certainly were not. In that province much of the land was already in the hands of the peasants, and such as was not thus allotted was cut up into medium-sized estates worked by their owners. These Magyar landowners amply justified their existence as such, for the methods employed by them—the use of modern agricultural machinery, suitable chemical manures, and an abundance of oxen to plough deep the soil—made their estates highly productive, and thus of definite value to the community.

To any reasonable person it must have been apparent that in Transylvania such a thing as a land reform was unnecessary; that if it were needed there must be some exceedingly strange reason to make it so. The reason in this case was that, under the guise of a measure to benefit the Transylvanian peasantry,

the Government were determined to use the measure to ruin the Magyar landowners. The Hungarian aristocracy and nobility in Transylvania, it was argued, were the classes to whom the Hungarian-Transylvanian peasantry would look for a lead. The aristocracy and nobility were loyal in their hearts to Hungary. Those hearts must therefore be broken and rendered completely harmless. I will not go into detailed figures here (anyone who is interested in them should consult the excellent statistical tables in Robert Birkhill's "Seeds of War"), but would merely state that the special Agrarian Reform Bill passed for Transylvania by the Roumanian Government is a peculiar document, providing as it does for the Hungarian landowners to lose *twice as much* land as the Roumanians in pre-War Roumania. Moreover, while in the case of the Roumanians no forest lands might be expropriated, in the case of Hungarians such lands can be and are taken. Again, though the Hungarian proprietor is compensated for the loss of his acres at the pre-War value of the land, the Roumanian is assessed on the average value of the land from 1917 to 1922. Since the Roumanian lei is to-day worth something like a thirtieth of what it was in 1914, the unfairness of the rate of the Hungarian compensation is apparent.

In effect, the Transylvanian Agrarian Reform has proved a gigantic failure. It has cost, and is to-day indirectly costing, Roumania an enormous amount of money. In the first place, the reform was carried out in such a miserably inefficient manner as to prove infinitely more expensive than had been

anticipated; and, secondly, the Roumanian peasants in Transylvania, to whom by far the largest amount of the expropriated land was given, have proved utterly incapable of making any satisfactory use of it. Driving through almost any part of that province, it is a tragic sight to see acre after acre of rich soil on which, through lack of agricultural knowledge or from mere laziness, the peasants have been able to raise nothing more lucrative than crops of weeds.

The question arises: if in Transylvania the Hungarian landowners have been so badly treated, how is it that they have managed to keep alive long enough to bother about hoping for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon? The answer is: by the gentle art of greasing the palm. In order merely to keep sufficient land to exist from, it is necessary, I am told, for the proprietor of the wreck of an estate to pay a regular and systematic series of doles to the various officials concerned with the administration of the Agrarian Reform. It does not matter how high in the service of the State the official may be: he is always willing, it is said, to arrange matters in return for a sufficiently large present. In support of this remark, I can quote the case of a Transylvanian friend of mine who entered in a ledger the bribes paid by him to be allowed to keep what had been left of his estates after the expropriation had been carried out. The amounts paid over a period of three years averaged out at rather more than he would have had to pay in *rent* at the present rates.

The Agrarian Reform was effective in subduing

the Magyar aristocracy and nobility in Transylvania; it was even more so in suppressing the churches and schools (denominational) which naturally had a considerable influence over the children of the Hungarian peasantry. Perhaps the best example of this is the case of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Oradea Mare (Nagyvárad), who held on behalf of the Church 360,000 acres of land out of which he supported the priests and charitable and educational institutions of his diocese, and who is now left with 200 acres. This is a typical instance of what has happened throughout Transylvania. In cases where individual schools withstood the losses suffered by the reform, a variety of reasons, one more feeble than the other, was given for why they should cease to function and children should be driven to attend the State schools. Among these reasons were the following: Schools being run with unpaid teachers; accommodation for pupils excessive; accommodation for pupils insufficient; unauthorized text-books; schools not in possession of Roumanian flags, and so on. In Brasov, when it was proposed to start night-schools in the Hungarian language for the apprentices, of whom sixty-eight per cent spoke only the Magyar tongue, permission to do so was withheld by the authorities, and the students were forced to attend the State schools, where only the Roumanian tongue was spoken. Again, in many of the denominational secondary schools, it was ordered that the matriculation examinations should be held in Roumanian by Roumanian teachers, with the obvious result that

practically none of the pupils passed. If they did succeed in doing so, they discovered on arriving at the university town of Kolozsvár that the university (which was formerly Hungarian) had been nationalized, and that the Hungarian professors had been replaced by Roumanians. It is true that if they so wish, students may go to the universities of Szeged or Budapest; but to do so involves the expenditure of more money than they can generally afford; and if by any chance they do manage such a course, they find on their return to Transylvania with a degree that every obstacle is placed in the way of their practising their professions.

The Agrarian Reform and the oppression of the churches and schools are the two paramount grievances of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania; and, though I am not personally acquainted with the conditions in Jugoslavia and Czecho-Slovakia, from what I can gather from the writings of such competent observers as Robert Birkhill and Sir Robert Donald, as well as from the experiences of such of my Hungarian friends as are unfortunate enough to be members of the Magyar minority in each of these States, things are not much better there than in Transylvania. There may be slight variations in the methods employed to put the Agrarian Reform into commission, but substantially the object and result of the measure have been the same: to oppress the aristocratic and noble classes, and to hand over the education of the peasant children to the nationalizing influences of the State.

I might here remark that I consider that

Hungarians, both in the new Hungary and in the Succession States, have every right to be dissatisfied with the Treaty of Trianon, the design of which, though it included the punishment of Hungary for her share in the War, was primarily to assure future peace in Eastern Europe. Yet: "Peace," to quote Lord Buckmaster,* "which by universal tradition is supposed to assume the aspect of a dove, descended upon Hungary in the form of a vulture and tore her limb from limb; tore her to pieces without the least regard to the economic interests of what remained, and left this unhappy country absolutely paralysed and impotent in the face of ancient and determined foes." Such a peace, I think it will be generally agreed, is not good enough.

Hungary to-day is in a critical condition, from which one thing only can rescue her—the revision of the Treaty of Trianon. I imagine that most people will agree with me, that on moral grounds Hungary is justified in seeking such a revision. But there is a second, and from the point of view of the rest of Europe, much more urgent reason for revision: the fact that the present relations between Hungary and her neighbours are a constant source of danger to European tranquillity.

Lloyd George was prophetic when, in 1919, he wrote: "There will never be peace in South-eastern Europe if every little State now coming into being is to have a large Magyar Irredenta within its borders." And he was only stating an unpleasant fact when, speaking at a League of Nations Union

* House of Lords, 17th November, 1927.

meeting in October, 1927, he said: "The causes and the dangers of war are in frontier conflicts, the origin of which is in the fact that the peace treaties were made in 1919 when the Allies were filled with all the bitterness of a long war and obtained only insufficient and impracticable information as regards European conditions."

There is no need for me to dwell on the unpleasantness of war. It will be sufficient if I repeat that in the relations of Hungary and the Succession States there are all the ingredients calculated to bring about another European upheaval. For this reason—if for no other—let us hope that the revision of Trianon will soon cease to be a subject for discussion, but will have become a *fait accompli*!

Eventually—it cannot be doubted—certain modifications in the peace treaties will be made in favour of Hungary; but until that happens the question of the future of Hungary depends upon her ability to maintain herself in the extremely difficult present. This, I think, she can do. Financially, the country is in a poor condition: wheat is down, wine unsaleable, and the tourist traffic, which might be so lucrative, negligible. Taxation is high and poverty general. But, although conditions are at present bad, they are infinitely better than they were in the chaotic years immediately following the declaration of the terms of Trianon. The currency has been stabilized, international isolation is ended, and political harmony within the kingdom has been achieved.

And those very considerable achievements are

the foundation-stones on which Hungary's hopes of revision are based. I do not wish to conclude this chapter without making at least passing reference to Count Stephen Bethlen, the Prime Minister, who has done so much to bring about this comparatively satisfactory state of affairs. He it was who negotiated the League of Nations loan which made possible the stabilization of the currency, and it was he who overcame what at one time looked like being fatal differences between the various political parties. Count Bethlen is exceedingly wise in the ways of men, and he has the almost matchless virtues in one who is both a politician and a statesman of being able to grasp an opportunity and to mark time until that opportunity is ready to be exploited.

With all his qualities, though, Bethlen could have done little for Hungary had he not had the spirit of his fellow Hungarians to back him up. Precisely what this spirit is composed of I find it difficult to say, though I think that the two main ingredients are pride in the tradition of a thousand great years of history and a tremendous determination to continue to live well.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE HOLY HUNGARIAN CROWN

IN writing of the future of Hungary, there is one factor on which too much stress cannot be laid. At the present time Hungary is a kingdom without a king, which is the same as saying that she is a country weakened at her strongest point, namely, in her tradition. The Holy Crown of Hungary still belongs to Hungary: it is still the emblem of the constitutional greatness of Hungary; but it is divorced from the people, and is thus rendered a lifeless, uninspiring object, owing to the fact that there is not a king to act as a vital link between it and the nation.

Glancing for a moment at the history of the Holy Crown, one understands how it was that Stephen came to be known as the Greatest Hungarian King. For it was his ambassador, Astrik, who bore to Pope Sylvester II the homage of the Hungarian nation, receiving in exchange the crown which confirmed Stephen in his inaugural sovereignty. The bishoprics which he had founded were ratified, and as well the Pope granted to him the power to build new ones, a power which is still vested in the kings of Hungary. In addition to these favours, Sylvester granted to Stephen and his successors the right to

style themselves "apostolic kings", and to have carried before them in procession the double cross (which is contained in the national coat of arms) as an emblem of their ecclesiastical authority. The gift of the cross, which had been intended for Boleslas of Poland, symbolized the blessing bestowed in perpetuity on the Hungarian nation by the representative of God in this world.

To this day the papal bull granting to Stephen the sovereignty of Hungary has been preserved. After acknowledging Stephen's humility and piety, the letter continues: "Thy country which thou hast offered, together with thy own self, to Saint Peter, and the people of Hungary, present and future, being henceforth received under the protection of the Holy Roman Church, we return them to thy wisdom, thy heirs and rightful successors, to possess, rule, and govern the same . . ."

As Vambéry, the Hungarian historian, has written :

The Christian Church was the corner-stone of all social and political order in the days of Stephen. The Church pointed out the principal objects of human endeavour, marked out the ways leading to the accomplishment of these aims, drew the bounds of the liberty of action, and prescribed to mankind its duties. It educated, instructed, and disciplined the people in the name and in the place of the State, and in doing this the Church acted for the benefit of the State. Hence it was that Stephen, in organizing the Hungarian Christian Church and placing it on a firmer basis, consulted quite as much the interests of his royal power as the promptings

of his apostolic zeal. Where the Christian Faith gained ground, there the respect for royalty also took root, and the first care of royalty, when its authority had become powerful, was to preserve the authority of the Church.

Stephen proved himself a great man by causing his desires—for Royalty and Christianity—to march hand-in-hand. He showed himself a great patriot by his realization that the successful fusing of those desires meant the uttermost good for his country. A strong kingship, he saw, was dependent on a strong church. The great nation, he knew, was the united nation; and national unity, was it not obvious? could come from one thing only, single leadership. Stephen had what we to-day should call personality. He “got there” every time, raising simultaneously the power of the Church, and that of the kingdom and the Kingship. Hungary went ahead under its first king. Feudalism, which was agitating medieval Europe, left (for the time being) Hungary untouched: the national energy was able to be directed towards a fully constructive policy. Other empires, more mighty than Hungary, indulged in internal quarrels and were grievously hurt by them; but Hungary, strong kings at her head, prospered. Later, a section of the Hungarian great lords was to become menacing, but such power as they did usurp was never sufficient to wreck the kingship.

The prerogative of the kings of Hungary has always been extensive. In the hands of a desperate ruler, it may have seemed unlimited. For, in

addition to the privileges granted to Stephen by Sylvester, the sovereign was the sole military chief; he disposed of the property of the Crown and of the State; and in him alone the judicial power was vested. Such an extensive power carried with it equally heavy responsibilities. Right from the day of Stephen's coronation, the King was held responsible, not only for all good, but as well for all evil, befalling the country.

From time to time, naturally, there were abuses of the royal power, and, to check them, the Golden Bull (a document corresponding to our Magna Charta) was drawn up in 1222. King Andrew II, whose disastrous reign resulted in the devastating Mongolian invasion of Hungary, was responsible for the appearance of the Golden Bull, the principal clause of which is as follows: "If We or one of Our successors shall at any time whatsoever infringe Our present decree, the bishops, lords, and nobles may, collectively and individually, now and at any future time, gainsay and resist either Us or Our successors without being guilty of treason." Thus, little more than two centuries after the inception of the Kingship of Hungary, while leaving to the temperate ruler his very extensive prerogative, we see the nation saying with no uncertain voice that excesses will not be tolerated. In effect, the office of Kingship in Hungary was no sinecure. Let the King be on high, in royal state, by all means—but let the King also be worthy man as well as strong ruler. Let him be an ideal to which the nation might look aloft!

To-day in Hungary, although no king occupies the throne, the notion of royalty as held by the nation at large is very much the same as it was at the commencement of this Christian monarchy. Above all things else, what Hungary requires to-day is the inspiration that a king, a truly apostolic, a truly patriotic king, could give.

For a long time Hungarian royalty was elective. There was a clause in the papal bull to that effect: “. . . Thy heirs and successors, too, having been lawfully elected by the Magnates of the land. . . .” Under the Habsburgs the monarchy became hereditary. And later still, after King Carol had been deposed by the Hungarian Government, acting under pressure from the Allies, the monarchy became once more elective. The original change over from an elective to an hereditary monarchy produced no change in the character of the monarchy. As Count Apponyi has written, the ceremony of the coronation supplied the guarantee that the early Hungarians had found in the principle of election. In the hereditary monarchy the heir to the throne succeeded the late King *ipso jure*. There was no need for the passing of any new law. But it was the duty of the King to get himself crowned within six months of ascending the throne. Until this was done, he did not enter into possession of the royal prerogative. Moreover, *before* the coronation ceremony could take place, the “inaugural certificate”, which was the new King’s constitutional confession of faith, had to be published in the form of an edict.

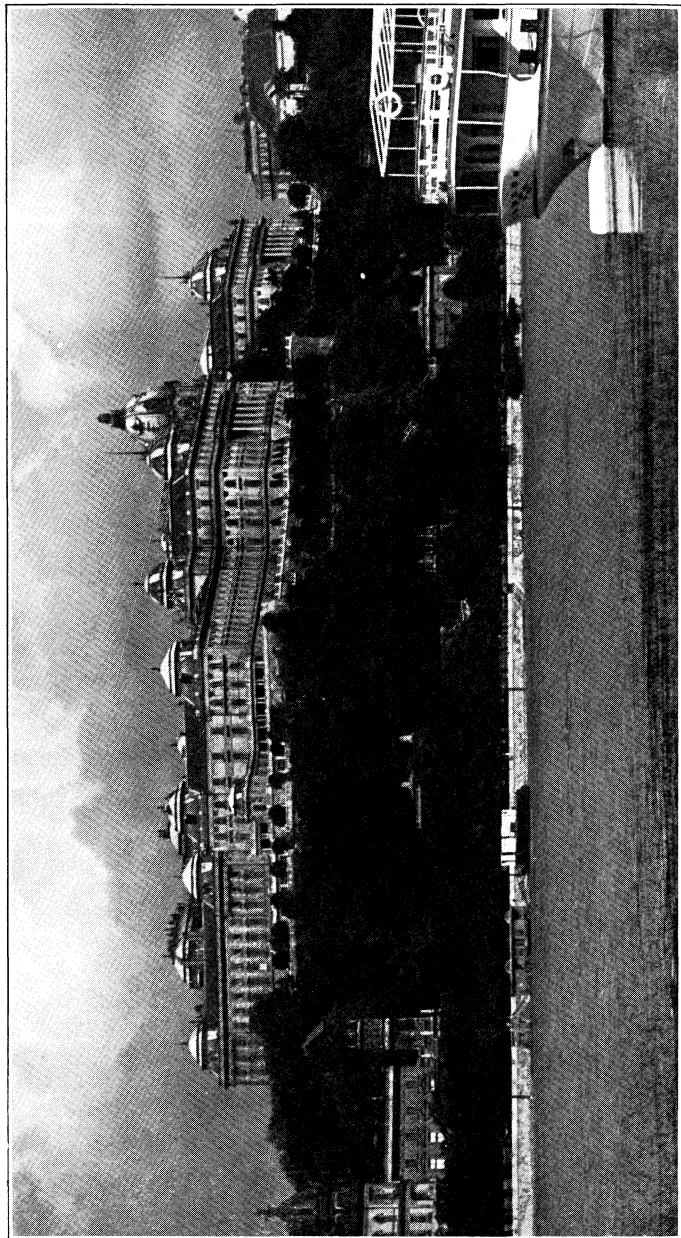


Photo by Ibusz Tourist Agency

ROYAL CASTLE, BUDAPEST, FROM THE DANUBE

Writing of the coronation ceremony, Count Apponyi says:

I will not waste words on the splendour of this ceremony; I merely insist on its character as a Constitutional Guarantee. By the negotiations and public acts preceding it, by the symbolic act itself, requiring the participation of a representative of the nation with the minister of God, the coronation of the kings of Hungary secures to Hungarian royalty its ancient character as a national delegation consecrated by religion. The nation *gives* the power, God *consecrates* it—only conditional delegation and benediction, however, for the same act that confers on the new king the plenitude of his prerogative also prescribes its limits; and the very God who is prayed to consecrate the royal prerogatives is at the same time called solemnly to witness that the limits of these prerogatives be strictly observed. Thus the coronation of the kings of Hungary is not a vain show, but an act of public law, combining the *mystical*—essential to monarchy—with the practical—necessary to the Constitutional Guarantee. . . .

Moreover, the Crown . . . is not only the symbol of royalty, but also of the Hungarian State, of the whole Hungarian nation, of her constitution and of her territory; it is even more than a symbol—it is the seat of sovereignty. . . . All the nobles, i.e., the whole legal nation, were (originally) called members of the Holy Crown; and to-day, when the ancient privileges of the nobility are enjoyed by all the people, this designation is applied to all Hungarian citizens without distinction. For the humblest of them, his king's prerogative is not a strange power, menacing, odious; it is, on the contrary, the principal organ, the head of a social body, to which he himself belongs within the modest sphere of his station, in the inviolability

of the royal majesty. In his eyes, this is the highest and most effective guarantee of his personal and political liberty.

And to-day Hungary is without a king. She can never, I am sure, attain to the heights for which, in the latter part of the nineteenth and the early years of the twentieth centuries, she was destined, so long as she suffers this disability. The Holy Hungarian Crown, great treasure of the nation though it be, is not sufficient. The Crown, for all its tradition, for all that it symbolizes the blessing of God's earthly representative on the Magyars, is at present inanimate. It is there in Budapest in the governmental strong-room; there, too, in Hungary are the people of the Hungarian nation; but until there is proclaimed a king who shall link together once more these two forces, Hungary cannot be fully reborn.

And if there is one thing more certain than Hungary's need of a king, it is that Hungary will have yet to wait some time longer before royalty once more inhabits the great palace on the Buda side of the Danube. Among many considerations which weigh against the immediate appointment of a sovereign the two most important are those affected by international diplomacy and internal economy. Internal economy I have already referred to in the previous chapter: the country is severely impoverished, and were the way otherwise entirely smooth, I do not imagine that Hungary could as yet afford to maintain a royal family in the manner in which, in Hungary, it would be necessary to main-

tain it. Any revision of the Treaty of Trianon will be in favour of Hungary's economic life; moreover, such a revision will, it is greatly to be hoped, free the country from its present humiliating position of having to submit to the approval of the Powers and the Small Entente States the name of any king whom it might be the nation's eventual wish to place on the throne. When the Treaty of Trianon was being drawn up in 1920, the Allied and Associated Powers made it perfectly clear that they would oppose any effort to secure a Habsburg restoration in Hungary. Since that time, however, conditions in Central Europe have changed rather considerably. Hungary herself, I am convinced, would permit such a restoration only conditionally; and the most important condition would be that there should be no imperial alliance with Austria. Should the Archduke Otto, elder son of King Carol, at some future date ascend the throne of Hungary, and should he attempt an Austro-Hungarian *rapprochement*, then there is, I think, little doubt but that the Hungarian nation would desert him, declare the throne vacant, and take advantage of its right to elect a king who would be able and willing to fuse his own desires with the national will.

But the Hungarian monarchy to-day is elective. It may quite well be that, even in the event of such a course proving practicable, Otto will not be asked to wear the Holy Crown. There are other candidates—the names of Count Bethlen, Archduke Joseph, Admiral Horty come to one's mind immediately—who might be invited (whether they would

accept is another matter) to assume the sovereignty. Otto, not a few patriotic Hungarians say, is very young, very inexperienced, has been educated in foreign lands. But those disadvantages are, in my opinion, the precise reasons why he might be the very man of whom Hungary stands in such great need. Youth, with charm, energy, courage; inexperience and willingness to be guided by those more versed in the intricacies of statecraft; a foreign education which has given a knowledge, if of nothing else, at least of the ways of the world of men—those are qualities which, wisely used, could do much for Hungary, a land held in high affection by all strangers who know it.

Who will be King in Hungary to-morrow? That is a question which I cannot answer. That I know of, there are no outstandingly strong favourites, perhaps no outstandingly enthusiastic candidates, in this race for a throne. This much, though, I can say: Hungary is a nation where tradition counts for a very, very great deal. And tradition will be fulfilling itself only when a worthy king is once more on the throne, a link between the Crown and the people.

THE END

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