



A MASS OF BLAZING COLOUR BEAT UPON OUR VISION, SEEMINGLY FROM A BED OF GIGANTIC FLOWERS.

[Chap. VII.]

Sketches of
Life and Character
in Hungary

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То

COUNT KALMAN ESTERHAZY.

DEAR COUNT ESTERHÁZY,—

It is primarily in a spirit of gratitude that my fellow traveller and I dedicate to you this sketch of our wanderings in your Land: but lurking in my mind is the wish to tell you that I hold you in part responsible for the existence of this little book. We crossed your path, as strangers in quest of the picturesque, and endowed with a great capacity for enjoyment. To this capacity you so ministered, that I for my part felt constrained to put my pen to an unfamiliar use, and to endeavour to tell the story of the summer days you gave us. That faults of inexperience should strew these pages is, I fear, inevitable. That some errors have crept in, is, I fear, but too probable; these, even if they should do injustice to your countrymen, I feel sure you will pardon, knowing me innocent in intention. Our interest in your country was first awakened by the eloquence of Professor Gyula Szádeczky, to whom, we shall ever remember, we also owe our introduction to yourself.

M. F.

OXFORD, 1892.

CONTENTS.

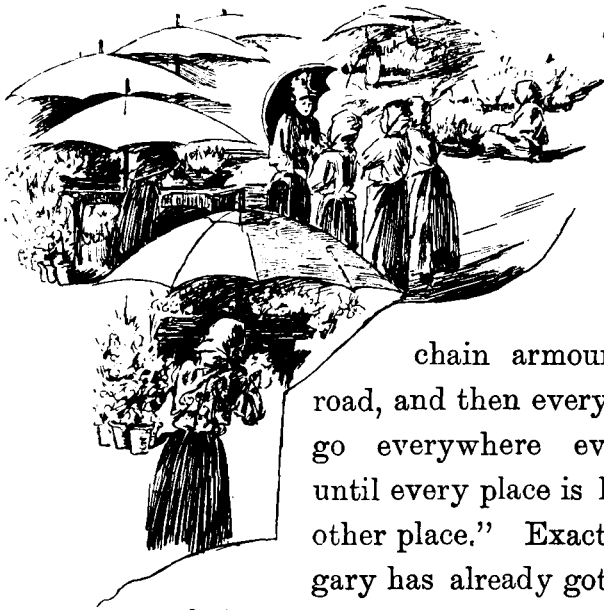
	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THEY BID US WELCOME	1
CHAPTER II.	
SCENES IN SUNSHINE	17
CHAPTER III.	
MERRY MAGYARS	28
CHAPTER IV.	
MULTUM IN PARVO	44
CHAPTER V.	
CONCERNING HUNGARIANS	54
CHAPTER VI.	
IN THE ALFÖLD	65
CHAPTER VII.	
SÁTRA UJHELY	80
CHAPTER VIII.	
LIFE IN A VICARAGE	97
CHAPTER IX.	
HOSPITABLE ROOFS	113

	PAGE
CHAPTER X.	
A MOUNTAIN WATERING-PLACE	121
CHAPTER XI.	
OVER THE GREAT PLAIN	184
CHAPTER XII.	
THE TZIGANES	157
CHAPTER XIII.	
BÁNFFY-HUNYAD	172
CHAPTER XIV.	
KOLOZVÁR	182
CHAPTER XV.	
TOO MANY FRIENDS	194
CHAPTER XVI.	
UP HILL AND DOWN DALE	204
CHAPTER XVII.	
AMONG THE SECKLERS	219
CHAPTER XVIII.	
SALT-MINES	229
CHAPTER XIX.	
BRANYICKA	233

SKETCHES OF LIFE AND CHARACTER IN HUNGARY.

CHAPTER I.

THEY BID US WELCOME.



“I SEE what the world is coming to. We shall put it into a

chain armour of rail-road, and then everybody will go everywhere every day, until every place is like every other place.” Exactly! Hungary has already got into her

chain armour — a very neatly constructed suit on the zone system, but she is not as yet in the least like any other country.

When on the 21st of June, 1891, we steamed into Buda-Pest, which, like most great cities, sends its worst suburb straggling to meet the foreigner, we had a chilling suspicion that in spite of our ambitions we might come, as other English travellers often do, to sitting dispiritedly on the benches in front of the "Hungaria," fingering the leaves of an unproductive guide-book. Unlimited sketch-books, as much Hungarian as goes to make up the titles of a couple of songs, and one acquaintance in the city were not, we felt, a complete outfit for a hope so large as ours, of mixing freely with all sorts and conditions of Magyars. However, no sooner had we taken possession of a vast parquet-floored room in the Hotel Pannonia—no Hungarian building is in difficulties about space—and begun untying two large bouquets of roses which some fellow-travellers had given us on learning our nationality, than our friend, an University professor, came to visit us. He was positively radiant with plans for our amusement, but we faced him a trifle sternly. "Now what are people in your country going to make of two young women travelling by themselves?" was a question that had to be asked; for the attitude of society would affect

our plans. A Magyar's courtesy is too agile a thing to be taken unawares, but Julian (this name bears a faint resemblance to the Hungarian original, and I shall use it, shorn of titles, for convenience' sake) seemed to regret the question. "Well, I don't think they are used to the idea here, you see. My own family, of course, are looking forward to meeting you; my friends are neutral, they are waiting to see you; and the public,—well, the public doesn't matter," was the gist of his answer when denuded of its delicate little ornaments, and we found it on the whole encouraging.

Our feet had hardly grown accustomed to the burning pavements of the city, when an incident occurred that found its way to the newspapers, and spread our humble names and high aspirations to every corner of the country. We were invited to attend a sitting in the lower House of the Diet, or Parliament, which corresponds very closely to our own House of Commons, and in point of interest throws the upper House, or Chamber of Magnates, quite into the shade. Since our visit, new parliament houses, very like our own at Westminster, have risen on the shores of the Danube, but it was to the old building in Sándor Street that Miranda

and I turned our steps on a stifflingly hot morning, and inhaled that peculiar quality of air that fills official places, as we took our seats in the gallery. We sat among a fair sprinkling of ladies, and contemplated the scene below in ever growing wonder. I think we had expected to find a sort of repetition of the *Chambre des Députés*, and here were ministers, so remarkably like Englishmen in dress and appearance; who spoke in a sonorous, dignified manner, with slight and singularly true gesture, that it required the witness of our ears to assure us that we were not in a glorified House of Commons. There was not an insignificant or a frivolous-looking man among them, although many of them were wielding paper fans quite coquettishly. Hungarians have the secret of looking their parts, and when a Magyar is a magnate, every inch of him testifies to the fact. We at once fell to making sketches, for although the debate on some railway question was weighty and pleasant to the ear, being all in Magyar, it was dark to us.

Miranda was anxious that our sketch-books should be well hidden. She said, if I were as clumsy as I generally was, I should spoil everything, because they might resent being sketched. Before long

something seemed to be passed in a whisper round the floor of the House, heads were turned our way, and opera-glasses were levelled at us. "I believe it is at us, and you have done it," groaned Miranda. At that moment a camera was pointed in our direction from the opposite side of the gallery. A verger bent forward and whispered in German, "Count A— has taken your photographs; that is his revenge for being sketched." The interest seemed to grow below. The President wrote something on a card, and gave it to one of the members, who disappeared through a door. For one awful moment we thought that public ignominy was to be our fate. We expected to be turned out. Perhaps sketching was a great breach of Magyar courtesy, or even a breach of privilege of the House. A door opened behind us, and the member came right on, and handed us the President's card. On it was written in English, "A hearty welcome to the fair ladies from the President." We drew long breaths of relief. This envoy, who was Julian's brother, and an eminent historian, was also the bearer of many other expressions of goodwill and welcome, and a request that we would allow our books to go down below. We sat and

watched their leaves fluttering in the fingers of members and ministers, trying desperately to remember if they contained anything that could offend, any gross caricatures, and were greatly comforted to see some of the sketches causing a good deal of laughter. Then the books went the length of the reporters' line, and from that moment we were marked creatures in Hungary. When we regained possession of them, beneath Miranda's version of the President "many thanks" was inscribed by his own hand. At two o'clock the House rose, after a rather demoralised sitting, and we, still puzzling over the interest we had aroused, came down the staircase into Sándor Street. A carriage was waiting at the main entrance, and three gentlemen were standing on the doorstep, evidently also waiting. As we passed, they raised their hats, with smiles, in which deference and amusement were blended, and then got into the carriage. One of them we recognised as the President.

Sketching in the streets, which had never been a difficulty, now became a luxury. It seemed that the entire population, having read in the papers that we were loose in the town, had vowed to

help our every whim. If the corners we chose were noisy, some one appeared and offered us the use of a room overlooking the scene, or volunteered to play policeman and drive small boys away. We soon began to feel unduly pampered.

What a sketching ground Buda-Pest offers! And there can be no rivalry between Buda and Pest, they appeal to entirely different tastes. Buda clammers about the hills, is all white and low and Eastern-looking, and bears distinct traces of the hand of the Turk in remnants of mosques and baths, while Pest, on the outermost rim of the great Plain of Rákos, and raised by the hands of a freed and ambitious people, contains all modern improvements and enterprises, together with crowded streets, full of life and colour. They face one another amiably over the water. The long white steps of the Pest shore, against which the waves of the Danube come splashing coolly, are flecked with gay patches of fruit, heaped under pale mushroom-shaped umbrellas, and brilliantly garbed peasants, who lie stretched out asleep, or gossip in lazy groups. Time is taken at its Eastern valuation here, so people, umbrellas, fruit and steps, all alike, lie there absorbing the rays of the burning sun;

and then, as the sun sinks behind the distant mountains, and the rock-crowned fortress on the opposite shore grows purple, and the lights begin to twinkle from the square-walled houses of old Buda, they still lie there, and all grow tepid again. Oh, happy Hungary, where time is not yet money!

Miranda and I decided very early that we had better get rid of all our previous notions about Hungarians and start fresh. Before we left England our friends had been energetic in warning us of the consequences of travelling alone among a "half civilised," "half Eastern people." They not only talked of annoyance, they hinted at positive peril. As an acknowledgment of their kind interest and a slight concession to public opinion, I wore a hunting knife, of whose use I had vague notions, in a sheath at my waist. No Hungarian eye ever fell upon that absurd weapon without an amused twinkle, and an exclamation of "Ah, that is because you have come among savages," always followed.

One of our first discoveries was that "'Arry" has no counterpart among the Magyars. Dandies and street-cads are alike invisible, unless a stray one has escaped from Vienna. The streets of Buda-Pest,

in strange contrast to those of London or Paris, seem to be frequented only by finely mannered people, and the manners of the Hungarians, like their cleanliness, go below the surface, have been in the blood of their forefathers, and are consequently reliable. It is extremely difficult at first to distinguish the pure Magyar type, since more than half the inhabitants of Buda-Pest are Jews, and Jews trying to conceal the fact, who have already adopted Hungarian names, and caught some of their courtesy and cleanliness. The violent sweeps of a Hebrew woman's figure usually betray her. Indeed, many of these ladies, being touched with an Oriental laziness, have come to resemble gigantic torsos on legless feet. With the men, we found that as a rule, a tall, well-grown, straight-featured specimen, not very dark, with hair ridiculously closely cut, and clothes *à l'Anglais*, would prove to be a Magyar, while the swarthy, black-eyed, thick-lipped beings, of our earlier notions, were Hebrews.

Hungarians themselves have developed to a remarkable extent the power of scenting a Jew, or even a strain of Jewish blood, and feel towards them very much as dogs do towards rats. The German element is also strong among the middle class

throughout the country; but that we found less difficult to detect.

Two days after our visit to the Diet, we entered the sacred precincts of a Hungarian household, and dined in a family circle. On such occasions you are all eyes and ears for trifles, and you run away with all kinds of stray occurrences on which to build absurd conclusions. On looking back, I think our first introduction misled us very little. Now, according to our English notions, Hungarian houses are not exactly comfortable, since they offer their inmates but little protection from one another's society. I shall come to the magnates' houses later, and to the fascinating peasant homes; but I will now throw a little light on the middle class households, comprising those of the lesser nobles, the professional classes, and those of such Magyars as have strayed into the bourgeois ranks. In Buda-Pest the flat system is very much in fashion, and in the country, all, except the grandest houses, are one storied and run round two or three sides of a courtyard, presenting only small windowed walls to the street, in quite Eastern fashion; so that stairs offer no problems for Magyar architects. The rooms are large and lofty, and all lead into one another. In the day-time the

doors are thrown open, and there is a fine promenade over the parquet floors. The beds, it is true, remain stately mahogany facts with rich coverlets, but all other traces of the sleeping-room are effaced. This free run must be most remarkable discipline to the tempers of the family, and may account for the charming adaptability of the Magyar women. With a little taste it would be extremely easy to convert Hungarian rooms into cheering and livable places, for so far East most artistic carpets and rugs abound, and the country is strewn with pottery and embroidered hangings, the handiwork of an unspoiled peasantry. But this little taste! where is it? Oddly enough, not among the ladies, but among the bachelors of Hungary. When time after time this surprising conclusion was forced on us, we remarked on it to our friends, who took it more calmly and showed less indignation than we expected. The reason is not far to seek. It is the men who travel and cultivate themselves and their tastes, and are sensitively anxious not to be behind the times. The women are content to stay at home and provide excellent food, and are happy in rooms boasting a table, sown inches deep with photographs, solid furniture on parade against the walls, and possibly

a chromograph of the dying Petöfi. I never once saw flowers used decoratively. I am loath to admit this temporary want in the Magyar women, for whom I have an odd sort of worship, and I have long ago resolved to devote the best part of a chapter to their virtues and magic charm.

We were invited for two o'clock, the hour of the most serious meal of the day. The Magyars certainly know how to live; their tables bear traces of the old days when a keen outdoor life meant high living too. The average dinner begins with soup, and works through a series of venison, goose, chicken, wild boar, beef, etc., richly besauced and done with their particular red pepper (paprika), followed by vegetables, and all sorts of creamy jammy pastries and iced things, then ends off in cheeses and fruits; and when you think the receptive capacity must be quite at an end, in comes a monster dish of smoking maize, boiled whole as it grows, each stalk a meal in itself; but your true Hungarian eats this too; and the whole feast is washed down and made possible by their matchless "Tokay" and other wines, and then sent to sleep with black coffee. A siesta often follows this repast.

I do not for a moment wish to imply that Magyars

consume an unseemly quantity of food. It is both rich and plentiful, and they understand the art of making it attractive to the eye in a way that would surprise an English cook. It is their natural love of hospitality that leads them to surround themselves with profusion, rather than attachment to the pleasures of the table.

Two little boys, with closely shaved heads and sleeveless low-necked jerseys, sat at the table eyeing us between every spoonful. Suddenly one raised his glass and sang out, "*Éljen à Angol!*" (Hurrah for England) in most manly fashion. Gallantry is conspicuous even in the children.

Our hostess, Julian's sister-in-law, told us that Count Kálmán Esterházy, having heard of our visit to Parliament, from which he was absent on the eventful day, would like to be presented, and would call that afternoon. "Esterházy" is one of the names whose fame has got into most lands, and from our experiences I incline to think it stands for some of the finest specimens of humanity.

He was announced while we were drinking our coffee. I confess to being extremely susceptible to picturesque personalities, or rather to individuals with a distinct place and meaning in this jumbled

universe, and a personal appearance that fulfils the same. Framed in the doorway Count Esterházy was as striking a portrait of the old school of elegance and chivalry, with a dash of the hero about him, as one could well wish to see. Tall and upright, he carried his head proudly, its white hair and beard contrasting with the dark skin. His face, with its regular features, was at once gentle and powerful, and could alternate quickly from sadness to childlike gaiety. This curious shifting mixture of melancholy and a frolicsome gladness, so remarkable in the Hungarian character, is a continual puzzle. One sleeve of his coat was pinned, for he had lost his arm in the war of liberty of 1848, which also deprived him of his comrade and friend, the patriot poet Petöfi. There can be no *mauvais* moments in Magyar introductions. So instinctive and finished are manners that there is no trace of art left about them. We were soon on the best of terms. But there was a meaning in his visit. The Count had heard that we wished to travel, and he meant us to do it well. There is an infinite protectiveness in Hungarians, and the idea of women in difficulties, or even annoyed, causes them positive pain. The kind old count, who was to prove a veritable fairy

prince, foresaw all sorts of small scrapes and bungles for us, and failures in the matter of seeing the best things. A map was spread on the table, and with the help of our host and Julian a tour was planned. The consultations were in Magyar. They nodded to us now and again. "Yes, it was all right." We should go here, be received there, he would arrange everything. The state carriage, with five horses, should take us from Debreczen over the great plain, like the wind. In Transylvania we should see a jolly life—a pageant of costume! Ah! there we should dance and have serenades! The Count's eyes danced at the memory of what frolics could mean. One thing they all three seemed decided on—we must have an escort. Julian should start with us, then the Count would arrange for others to meet us. We glanced at our hostess to see if she shared this opinion. She smiled, "Yes, it would be far better always to have a gentleman to smooth away all difficulties." Really, this was a surprising and a charming country. Now we in England should have seen the impropriety in travelling with, not without, a gentleman. The newspapers soon had a paragraph giving Julian's name as at present engaged in conducting the English ladies on their

travels. All these preparations for our insignificant selves struck us as comically lucky. Being entire strangers the sense of gratitude weighed on us, and we attempted something in the way of thanks. The Count waved it gracefully aside. "He greatly liked and honoured English ladies, and his motive, after all, was partly patriotism. He loved his country so much that he liked to think that visitors were seeing the best of it."

CHAPTER II.

SCENES IN SUNSHINE.



ROUMANIAN.

THE citizens of Buda Pest have made themselves a little paradise for a summer evening on Margaret Island, which lies in the middle of the Danube, a short distance above the town. Although this island passes most of its winters under water, nevertheless every summer it contrives to develop luxuriant flower-beds, velvety grass, and spreading trees. Once the home

of St. Elizabeth, fragments of whose nunnery still

linger among the foliage, it is now the site of baths for utilizing the hot sulphur springs, pensions for invalids, and restaurants for pleasure seekers. We often sought and found pleasure there of an evening, taking our supper at one of the hundred little tables that are spread in the shade of wide trees, and drinking in the sounds of Tzigane music. First impressions of a gipsy band, heard on its native soil, in the night air and in the midst of hundreds of Hungarian hearts all thrilling in response, may boldly be put down as among the liveliest known to man. I had looked forward with some anxiety to Miranda's first meeting with the gipsies, for I knew something of her passion for their music. It took place under the trees of Margaret Island, and I saw the eyes of the little cymbal player, as he sat in the midst of the violins and cellos, flicker with an uncanny light in his flat olive face as they caught sight of us and rested on Miranda. In an instant she was upon the platform, all among the gipsies, handling the little padded sticks, and trying to strike notes from the long wires of the cymbal. The gipsies, divining an enthusiast, were all aglow in an instant, and played song after song of her choosing. I attribute it entirely to my restraining influence that she is back

in England now, and not wandering over the great plain in the rear of some minstrels.

At one end of the island rises a boat-house, built by Clasper, such as may be seen any day on the Thames. It is the property of a handful of progressive young athletes, who call themselves the *Buda Pest Rowing Club*, and who launch an "eight" from its raft. Clasper, it seems, not only raised this boat-house, but coached a crew on to victory over the Viennese. One of the members was introduced to us, a young Goliath of sufficiently massive proportions to sink any eight. "Big Peter," as we called him (for we were forced to adopt a code of names for private use, native ones being so unwieldy), invited us for a row. Having been to school in America, he spoke transatlantic English fluently, and combined a passion for English sports with an adoration of Turks and Turkish society, which seems to point him out as the possessor of abnormally Catholic tastes!! "Big Peter" pulled with vigour and finish, and was most technical in his terms. He "stroked" the boat "bow" side, in north country fashion, with such confidence that I had not the heart to criticise, though warmly invited to do so. When I took an oar his delight knew no bounds,

and my surprise that the boat kept straight was as great as his own. We rowed up and down in front of an old and despised boat-house, and "Big Peter" constantly breathed a wish that the "other fellows" could see the wonderful sight. I tried to wish it too, for his sake, but secretly hoped the "other fellows" did not know much about it.

On the hottest day of my experience, we stepped on to a Danube steamer bound for Visegrád, which lies in the hollow of mountains on the water's edge, some miles above Pest. On that day I came very near realizing the sensations of the prize sheep at an agricultural show, which is kept in a state of basking existence by repeated douches of cold water. Count Esterházy, whose business called him in the same direction, hearing of our intention, had, with all-encompassing forethought, provided iced melons and drinks, and in the brief rallies after each sip I was conscious of the quivering surface of the water, undulating shores, floating corn mills turned by the swift stream, sleepy villages and white steeples reflected in the waves, together with a constant pink fringe of enviable naked little Magyars along the shores. At Visegrád we sank down under cool flowering trees and arranged to return by train, as

of boats there were no more that day, and planned to reach a fine old ruin that crowned a steep, wooded hill. We promised to meet the Count at the station, and then, once up those cool hills, resting among the flowers, and letting our hot thoughts ramble over the opal mountain tops and down on to the silver water, we forgot all about times and trains until the dusk came down. Scramble and run and tumble as we would, and dash through private gardens, and in here and out there, we only reached the water's edge in time to see the old ferry-boat on its return journey, and the white curl of smoke of the last train fade on the opposite shore. Darkness had come on apace, and we strolled into an inn garden and had supper among the moths and bats that dabbled against the glass-shaded candle on our table. It would be pretty easy, we thought, to find rooms. Not so thought the landlord. He seemed confident that no such thing could be had on either side of the water. We looked to Julian as a native and our escort to sketch out our course of action. An oriental calm had fallen upon him. I began to wonder if the hillsides were dry enough. The nights were very short. But though a night under the stars seems natural enough in wild places, it seemed a

trifle tramp-like near so many houses. Julian inquired abruptly, "Who is the principal gentleman of the place?" He wrote on one of his visiting cards, "Two English ladies have missed the train, and are in want of hospitality!" "I shall send him this in."

Miranda and I glanced at one another. In England we should think this sort of thing a trifle calm; but we were getting acclimatised. Julian vanished with the card, and Miranda and I waited in the utmost confidence. In less than ten minutes a tall being emerged from the darkness, and, bowing, offered me his arm in silence.

Julian followed with Miranda, calling out encouragingly to me, "He speaks a little German."

We used to accuse Julian of withholding any explanation on occasions of this sort, that he might entertain himself off the conflicting expressions of our faces.

In silence we passed down the street, and under a wide archway into a colonnade, that, to judge by the scent-laden air, must have skirted a rose garden. A lady was soon smiling and giving us a pantomimic welcome, as she removed our hats, in a large room

hung round with weapons and spoils of the chase. Julian now proceeded to explain to us that our host was a chief ranger, the house was a royal shooting-box, and that Miranda and I should have the honour of passing the night in the king's and queen's beds. We prepared ourselves for the coming luxury by some moonlit hours among the roses, eating fruit drenched in some rare old wine, got up from the cellar for the occasion. We listened to tales of royal visits and royal prowess while we fingered photographs of shooting and hunting parties, and by the light of a shaded candle placed on the summer-house table.

As Miranda and I lay that night among lace frills, and under blue and crimson satin quilts, we decided that travelling was rather easy.

Margaret Island is by no means the only public garden, and we found ourselves one Sunday afternoon in the Városliget, the sort of people's park that we English picture in our day dreams, lying on the outskirts of Pest. Not a tract of land, seized and railed round and haunted by guardians, but walks and glades carved out of a forest, with water and islands and flowers, and plenty of restaurants to minister to practical wants, where green is green,

and the sun bright enough to cast ultramarine shadows.

A seething mass of brilliantly garbed humanity, to all appearance a medley of the costumes of middle Europe, lured me from the rest of our party. Why this special avenue was popular was soon obvious. It ended in a little fair. In and out of the crowd threaded nursemaids, carrying most curiously dished up babies. I say "dished up" advisedly, for they were stretched on frilled pillows, and then from head to toe tightly pegged down with a muslin coverlet, so that not even a small arm could be raised. I took them at first to be waxen advertisements for some confectionery. Bare-legged water carriers padded softly about, carrying green earthen jugs. Both men and women were jaunty in top-boots, and each feminine head was bound in a brilliant handkerchief. There was a very festive spirit everywhere, for Sunday is a regular gala day in Hungary.

But there was one group that did not share in the general mirth, and around which the rollicking crowd had left a little space. On the grass under the trees a sheet was spread, and upon it lay a sick child asleep. Its thin, bare legs were drawn up,

with the knees outwards, and death's finger was plainly very near to touching the colourless face, with its tired lines and dark-ringed eyes. A peasant mother sat motionless beside it, her head bent forward in the effort to hear, amidst the boisterous swirl of music from show and booth, the child's faint, difficult breathing.

Before long I began to attract an embarrassing amount of attention. An old peasant woman, who spoke a little broken German, took my arm.

“Had I come from over the sea?”

She picked up a chatelaine I wore.

“Was I a nun?”

An excited crowd prompted her questions from behind.

“Had I parents, and were they not frightened for me?”

“She is no peasant; all ladies in England dress in white,” she called back scornfully, to the suggestion that my rank might be asked. A party of girls began stroking my dress, and inquiring if all English ladies had the same hair, and if it was true that we never saw the sun. The situation was growing warm, and I cast an eye round for a mode of escape. “Would I promise to come next Sun-

day? Would I tell them my history?" continued the questioner.

The rest of our party came up in the nick of time, and pushing their way through, good-humouredly dispersed the people. They soon closed round us all more thickly than ever, finding us so much more interesting than the shows.

We were engaged in trying to persuade a Bosnian stick seller to stand still to be sketched, in any language but his own, when a young officer advanced to our assistance. I fancy he had been watching his opportunity; and now he and Julian put themselves into a succession of elaborate postures, advancing nearer at each one, and with a final exchange of cards the introduction was completed. He placed his knowledge of the Bosnian language at our disposal, and begged for the honour of protecting one of the ladies, seeing how dense the crowd was. Things went better after this. The officer, with an occasional circular wave of his sheathed sword, kept us a little space to move in; and it was under his protecting weapon that we saw the Hungarian version of Punch and Judy, which rejoices in the name of "Paper Joe," and in which drama a white rabbit and two kittens have important rôles.

We saw something more of our new found champion, as he invited us to visit some barracks and be present at a musical drill. The half-shy and wholly respectful welcome which the soldiers accorded us was quite pretty. One man consented to be bound as a prisoner, that we might sketch him in his ignominy, while a group of young officers stood ready to pick up fallen indiarubbers and pencils, and wide-eyed, astonished privates ranged round the room. A company of Hungarian infantry has quite a mediæval appearance, as, instead of trousers they wear dark blue tights, embroidered on the thighs in yellow, and when marching, swing the right arm with the right leg. We were hard at work, when a superior officer, with nodding plumes and stern of aspect, clanked in. He took the situation quite sweet-temperedly. Perhaps he thought it unlikely to occur again.

CHAPTER III.

MERRY MAGYARS.

WE had decided not to begin Count Esterházy's Transylvanian programme until August 1st. That date was still a month hence, and there was much to be seen and done in Hungary proper. We had been asked if we cared to join the "Buda-Pest Karpathian Society" on a trip to the Valley of the Waag, near the north-western frontier. It was rather a dark question, and we felt our knowledge of the facts upon which to base a decision to be so very slight. Suppose it should prove to resemble one of our archeological society's expeditions, or worse still "a Cook's party"; most distinctly we should *not* care to join it, be the Waag never so beautiful. After some deliberation we decided to venture, and turned up at seven o'clock one morning at the wrong end of the station, and should have missed three highly coloured days, if the president had not caught sight of us in the nick of time,

and swept us off to the train. We were naturally anxious to investigate our fellow travellers, who in their turn entertained a lively curiosity on our account. The entire carriage was filled with the society, but we sat in state in a compartment by ourselves, while the president brought the members in by twos and threes, and introduced them. Two Jewish ladies were the first to arrive, who spoke a very fair English, and at once unfurled a motherly sort of wing over our heads. The muster of English phrases by the rest of the party was most striking. I fancy that each one waited in the passage, until he had constructed or borrowed something to say, then claimed a turn and shot it off. One owl-like old gentleman advanced to Miranda, and began as follows: "I vas ever of opinion that de honest man who married and brought up a large familiee did more service dan he who continued single and only talked of population. I chose my vife as she did her vedding gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but such qualitees as voud veer vell."

I saw Miranda look wildly round for interpretation or rescue. "Ze Vicker of Vakefield *est-ce-que c'est bien dit?*" added the old gentleman in explanation. This was his great linguistic triumph, and we had

the benefit of it at least a dozen times during the journey. One portly old professor filled the doorway, shouted, "God safe England, hip, hip, hurrah!" and retired to the sound of distant applause; another, styled by the younger members the "bird papa" (Vögel papa), fixing a round and bird-like eye upon me, said, "Bless de Queen," with much feeling, and then relapsed into silence for the rest of the journey. All this was very gratifying to our patriotism, but it hadn't much future, and by the end of a five hours' journey we had evolved a polyglot jargon, eked out in the weak places by primitive cries and sounds, and were on excellent terms with all our comrades. These comrades were attired in widely varied costumes. One closely rivalled "Tartarin," which seemed to point to a sharp ascent being in prospect; others had a good deal of Jæger about them, and had reduced their toilet to bare necessities, and a few more looked got up for a promenade. Miranda and I speculated on which would prove appropriate, for we had the vaguest notions of the nature of the expedition. Some small guide-books were dealt round, and a list was handed us containing the names and professions of our party. We were further informed that at our destination

we should meet a Danish tourist society who were engaged on an European ramble. Denmark had once entertained some Magyar tourists, and this was a return visit. I look back with fondness to the plucky little company of gentle old ladies and grave-faced men, who met us with such embracings, such waving of banners, such toasts, and then at the end of three days faded off into Bosnia; but at the time we rather resented the idea of their junction, as likely to be chilling to the spirits. Hungarian trains are all on the "corridor" system, which makes sociability possible, and are excellent in the matter of speed. We swept over the great plain, dotted with groups of peasants at work in the sun, as gay as poppies. Then we curled in and out of mountains, and came alongside of the Waag, with its constant burden of pine rafts, bound for the Danube.

Where men and ways and the broad lines of the landscape are so strange, it gives you a curious thrill of surprise to see familiar elder bushes and wild rose brambles straggling along the edge of the railway line. All sense of familiarity vanished at the stations, which are clean, gaily festooned with creepers, and contain lavish supplies of fresh fruit and drinks for the traveller. At three o'clock we

arrived at Zsolna and saw the Danes already on the platform, circling their luggage, as if they had all been shot out together by a previous train.

There was something splendid about the noise of that meeting. Above the screech of trains and the banging of doors, rose the riot of violins. The Tziganes had come almost to the carriage windows to welcome us. Our president unfurled a banner, and rushing into the arms of a tall being under another banner, gave him a jolly hug. A general handshaking, squeezing, and cheering followed, and the Buda-Pest Society had met the section for the Waag valley, and the Danes were welcomed by both. An extensive banquet was spread in a large room opening on to the platform, and we scrambled through course after course to a tempest of music, and eyed the Danes. There were several little old ladies in mushroom hats, two solidly built young ones, and a good many elderly men, in some way related to them. The only remarkable one of the party was a fair young woman travelling with her husband, who coolly accompanied him with a very large cigar after every meal. Every one's spirits rose in a marked degree under the influence of that feast, and old Tartarin, who had previously told us

we should dance that evening, repeated it again and again with a broader smile.

At the word of command we got into eleven ramshackle, springless vehicles, each drawn by two wiry horses, with a Slovak peasant as driver. We went along at a furious rate, the carriage containing the presidents and the banners leading. The rest passed and repassed one another recklessly, as, for want of anything better upon which to vent their spirits, they all professed a wish to be near the English ladies. We were close to the Moravian frontier, in the department of Trencsén, among a Slovak people who in temperament, habits, and appearance are utterly unlike the Magyars. We passed large-hatted peasants in straight white garments, and hair cut Byzantine fashion over their melancholy faces, driving cattle, or seated on long rough carts, drawn by white oxen. Women in white shift-like garments stopped their work in the fields to watch us pass, or ran to quiet the babies, slung up in little hammocks in the blazing sun, whom the noise of our approach had aroused. There was a touch of colour about the people here and there, but the prevailing tone was black and white, in harmony with the patient mournful look on their

faces. The peasants of this district had in their expression a power of pathos, hard to define, but impossible to ignore. Just the "Slavonic melancholy," probably, that must for ever rest inscrutable to the Teuton. Idle, dirty, futile creatures the Magyars find them; but their features, of a type common in early Italian art, and their shy woodland ways, are such as at once to captivate an artist's heart. Their vague, unpractical movements are full of a poetry that the *débonnaire* gait of the Magyars quite misses. I was puzzling over this strange silent gift of expression about the peasants of the district, when a young Slovak appeared, high up the valley side, whose pose elicited a murmur of applause from the eleven carriages. Sharply silhouetted against the sky, his attitude summed up the very spirit and meaning of freedom. Before I had time to commit a single line to memory, the youth, disconcerted by the volley of glances, changed his attitude, and with it a whole poem vanished into nothingness. That corner of Hungary lingers in my mind as one calculated to set a sculptor's brain reeling. We passed through a little white straggling town, whose square market-place was colonnaded round with cloister-like arches, and

numberless rude villages built entirely of pine wood. All along the road blue mountains swept away to right and left. To one of these a Hungarian gentleman in our carriage pointed as the home of his forefathers, his face instinct with the ineffaceable pride of the Magyar. "It is nothing," he hastily added; "but it shows one is not a Jew." Now and again a gipsy would start up with dramatic gesture and rush forward to beg, leaving a swarthy wife, with a nest of dark skinned children, under a rough canopy by the roadside. He would keep pace with our carriage, his rags half falling from him, pleading in the familiar beggar's drawl.

At last, as the shadows lengthened, we reached the little watering-place of Rajecz-Teplicz, a group of long, low, cool-looking buildings, standing in rose gardens in the hollow of high hills. A Tzigane band greeted us, and a rough cart containing our luggage, which had had an hour's start from the station, was already at the gate. Half a dozen of the society, who had already formed a sort of volunteer body-guard around Miranda and myself, struggled for our luggage, and as the president called out the numbers of our rooms, they marched us off in triumph. We were quartered in the

buildings which contained the Baths, a wooden one-storied construction comprising some twenty or thirty rooms. The proprietor, who was also the



medical attendant, a landowner, a member of Parliament, and a man of fashion, ran after us and begged us to visit the Bath. "A hot mineral bath would be so refreshing after a journey!" "Wouldn't we

join?" "Ladies undress here, gentlemen there." He waved vaguely in different directions, and took his leave. The "body-guard," with a shout of "*Auf wiedersehen im Bade,*" rushed through a door, and Miranda and I were left facing one another on the brink of a hot swimming-bath, quite bewildered, but also quite determined that nothing would induce us to meet the exuberant Magyars and the solemn-faced Danes in that bath, and attired in the grotesque costumes which we saw hanging on the walls. We found a little square off-shoot from the bath, guarded by a female attendant, and there, behind closed doors, we floated in peace and darkness. Through certain imperfections in the wood-work we could catch glimpses of the body-guard disporting in garments tightly tied round the ankles, and with the extra decency of shoes and biretta-like hats. They evidently expected us, hence the extra decency of shoes; but their boyish gambols caused us to rejoice in our door.

We met again in the gardens, and the proprietor presented us each in turn to his wife; then turning to me, he invited me for a stroll, and down a side path; he it said to his infinite honour, recited two pages of the "Cricket on the Hearth," and one of

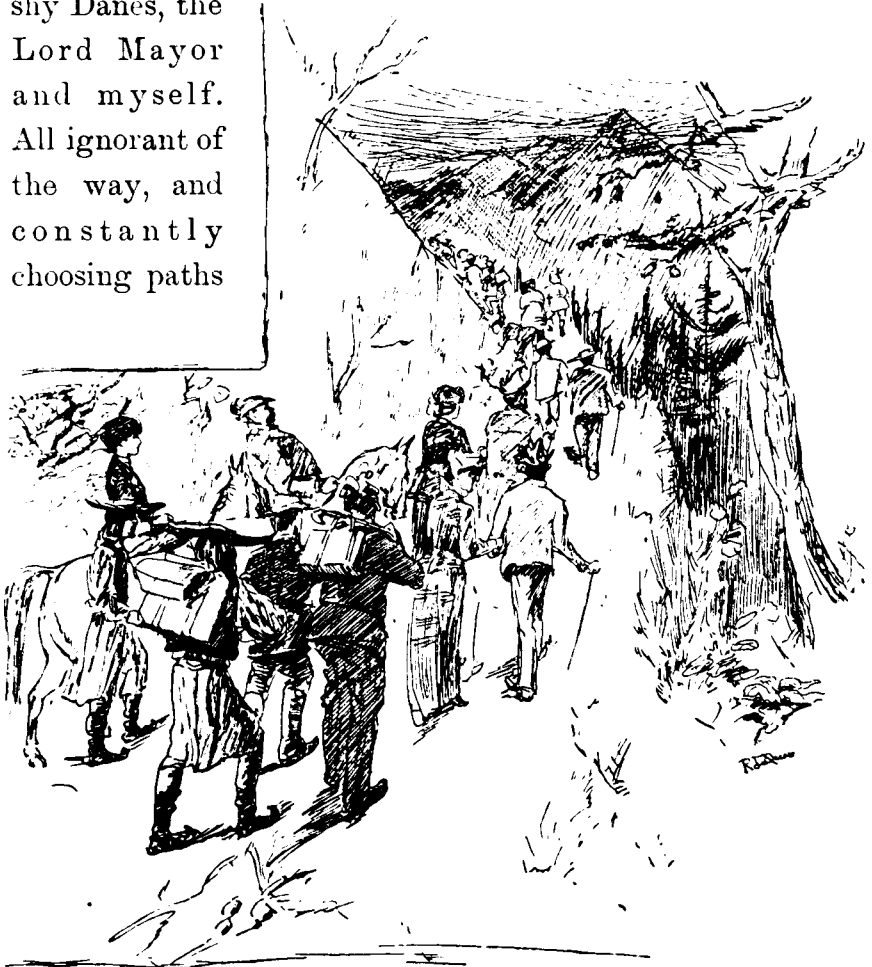
Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," quite seriously, and without understanding one word. Miranda and I wandered in the woods, sniffed in the night air, and whenever we stopped, the body-guard mustered to wait on our possible whims. If we wanted to sketch, peasants were caught and forcibly held, covering their faces with their hands to escape the evil eye. We dined in a long vine-festooned verandah, at tables strewn with glass-shaded candles which twinkled in the dusk. Toasts ran high to Denmark and to England, and the Danes broke into their national cheer, a lugubrious noise which resembles a succession of bad groans. Some one seized a violin from a gipsy and led them until they were sufficiently warmed to their work, and then we all adjourned to a large hall and danced the csárdas, and the peasants crushed their heads through the windows till they blocked out any breath of air. So ended our first day with the Buda-Pest Karpathian Society, giving us after all only a faint foretaste of how much they could cram into a short space of time. The wise reader may wonder why a society that indulged in such a mild frolicsome excursion as this was dignified by the name of "Karpathian." This trip, it must be re-

membered, was a sort of summer treat for the weaker brethren, who liked to be happy without the sense of achievement before and behind them. Really working members open up new ascents and cut paths through the impassable in the higher Karpathians every year.

By seven o'clock next morning, having all disposed of coffee and rolls, and received bouquets of roses, we were ready to say good-bye to Rajecz-Teplicz. Three horses were provided, two being for elderly gentlemen, and one, with a chair-like saddle, to give the ladies a lift in turn. I observed no desire on the part of the ladies to compete with the other sex; they liked to be considered very much the weaker vessels, and clutched at all chances of assistance. A Slovak led each horse, and one followed, bending under a load of cloaks and umbrellas, for the sky was threatening. The ground was wet and mouldy, as we wound in procession along little paths cut through the forest, round and round a small mountain. In our midst an elderly Dane sat his nag with such dignity as to win the nickname of Lord Mayor. Now and again we came to a clearing, and saw the white mist-wreaths being sucked up from the neighbouring

mountain hollows. At nine o'clock the president called a halt on an open hillside; for several stout gentlemen required to get their wind. A gaunt shepherd, with a child in his arms, came close, and studied us with an impartial gaze. Peasant girls pushed through the bushes, picked up our hands and kissed them, and then offered us little pails of crimson strawberries to eat. It is hardly necessary to mention that neither Miranda nor I had any notion where we were going, or what time we were due, or when would be our next chance of a meal. We had decided on a policy of perfect confidence in every one and everything, and I recommend this course to any one travelling among a chivalrous race. There is a complimentary touch, too, in implicit trust, that sometimes has a magic effect. On this occasion we were all in the same case, as the president alone knew the goal. As the hours wore on, and the sun got fierce, and many up and downs had been passed, the staying powers of the party were put to the test. The ladies, in foolish shoes, began to want a lot of help in rough places. At twelve o'clock the horses were all sent back, the dignified Lord Mayor came solidly along on his feet, under a large umbrella, in the faith that rest and a

dinner awaited him at every turn. A sort of advance guard had straggled on, consisting of the Jews and a few shy Danes, the Lord Mayor and myself. All ignorant of the way, and constantly choosing paths



on the strength of arrows on trees, that might be coaxed into pointing any way.

Suddenly the rain came down in merciless torrents, and turned the paths into water-courses. How we longed for the Slovak with the cloaks. The Lord Mayor, who had no French or German, developed a little broken English, and murmured, "We are all loosed." Wet and draggled, we plunged on under terrific rain, across open cornfields, when suddenly something stopped the way. The Lord Mayor had sat down in a small stream. It was a pitiful sight; as I pulled him up, he turned to me and said, "English Miss, I tremble!" and, indeed, he was nearly crying. Just as we came to a straggling village, the sun burst out, one of the Magyars overtook us with the news that we were on the right track, and the world in general cheered up. The peasants were pouring out of a little white-washed church, massive family Bibles with brazen clasps beneath their arms. I put my head in the doorway. How all churches smell alike! The stately gentleman did the same, but the rude Catholic symbols were too much for his Protestantism, and he drew it back smartly. At length, on a bridge, backed by a jumble of buildings, stood a jolly look-

ing man with a well-known banner. The music burst up from somewhere. Some one rushed into his arms, and we trooped into a large farmyard, our haven of rest.

CHAPTER IV.

MULTUM IN PARVO.



ELEVEN more rough carriages were awaiting us, and all the farm hands were standing about in their Sunday gear. In the great roomy kitchen, women servants ran up and wiped our shoes and brought water for our hands; but we protested by signs that the damage was serious, and we must get our packages somehow, and find

a less public spot. After a long course of gesticulation I got the traps, all except my own, which was nowhere to be seen, up into an imposing-looking

salon, and fished one dejected lady up after another as they arrived; and there they sat on their bundles, like a circle of draggled birds, bemoaning the colds they were going to catch. The expedition had been planned with such energy that no allowance had been made for delays, and vigorous shouts soon brought the ladies down, to find a huge disordered dinner table already ravaged by the men, who were feeling revived enough to give our entrance a jolly cheer. The "body-guard" gave a hasty wash to some implements, and piled our plates with anything and everything. I don't know what we ate. I know that it was good, and that every time I turned my head there was something fresh on my plate. The same plate always. A little old Danish lady, sitting by my side, thawed with the reaction and the food, stroked my arm and assured me that we were the best of friends, though we could talk very little together. She was a simple old soul, who might have stepped out of "Cranford," and now, at sixty years of age, was taking this trip with a maiden sister a few years older; and although I couldn't but suspect this outburst owed its expression to the generous Hungarian wine, it was prettily done, and she never

went back on her words. It was close upon three o'clock when we again dashed off. This time the English ladies were invited into the presidential chariot. The president's eyes immediately caught sight of my wet feet, and his sanitary soul revolted. (He was inspector of Public Health). He had my shoes off in a twinkling and hung behind the coachman to dry, and insisted on my stockinged feet projecting over the side of the carriage, in the sunlight.

Our way lay through rocky valleys and wild places, until five o'clock brought us within sight of a village street: fresh banners, fresh leaders, and fresh embracings. All out in some gardens, that were thickly draped with the national colours, a sparkling looking feast was spread. But we had not recovered from the last meal, when we had all eaten more than we had any notion of at the time. So we called out *au revoir*, and made for some rocky pass in the distance. Those Slovak drivers, with their springless carriages, attempted a road any other beings would have considered impassable. We drove at an acute angle; we leapt in the air, when we crossed tree trunks or boulders; we went axle deep in water, and rolled up against

banks, but we arrived back at last, dry and in good humour, and ready for the *al fresco* feast. Crowds of peasants pressed with excited faces over the low fences, and now and again scraps of food were thrown to them. One fierce gipsy stretched an arm right across on to the table, chattering volubly, and calling our attention to a sweet, naked child, with a pink rag on its shoulders. There were plenty of sickening spectacles of disease in the crowd, which were freely displayed, for this again was a Slav village, and the Magyar rude health and independence had no place in it. Suddenly, through all the merry sounds, came the tinkling of a little bell, nearer and nearer, and the big bell in the church across the road began to toll. The peasants drew back on either side, forming an avenue, and on came a bent old man, ringing a bell. A peasant, in a long flannel garment, carrying a crucifix, and a woman, in short skirts and topboots, trudging behind with laboured, ungainly walk. Under her strong arm was a small white wooden coffin, upon which a few flowers were placed. The women and children fell in behind, and on went the rough little funeral to the plaintive tinkling bell, while in the rear, toddled of its own accord, a child, sobbing aloud.

After this feast we had recourse to the railway for about half an hour, and arrived at a small town with an entirely new type of people and costume. Both were considerably smarter and livelier, being partly Magyarised. It was again a case of carriages, and in the deepening dusk we got over a great tract of country, only pausing once to push our way into the thick of a peasant dance. At last we arrived at the Baths of Trencsén Téplicz: stately buildings of the hotel type, with restaurants, and circled by boulevards. The entire population of the little town were collected to inspect us. When Miranda and I reached the spacious room allotted to us, we sank upon the sofa, fairly bewildered by the day's long panorama, and not a little exhausted by the effort of trying to grasp the characteristics of a dozen different villages, to say nothing of doing justice to those two feasts. "Well, now we can rest and take a little breath, not to mention washing," we exclaimed together, for we were white with dust. In a few moments, however, a "garçon" appeared. "The gentlemen are waiting for you." "What gentlemen—where?" He seemed unable to clear it up, so we dragged our weary limbs after him across the boulevards and through buildings,

thinking we were summoned to hear the orders for the morrow, and that it was cruel not to have given them to us before; but the door of a vast hall was thrown open, and an appalling sight met us. Two long brilliantly lit tables, groaning beneath fruit, flowers, glass and silver, vanished in perspective, and close to the door was a veritable regiment of extraordinarily tall and elegant-looking men, sprinkled with orders or medals, looking horribly imposing. It was too late! The doors were closed on us, and we two dusty, sleepy creatures were being formally presented to all. How bitter we felt with the other ladies for deserting. (The Danes had gone weakly to bed). How we longed for a few more shabby-looking tourists to turn up and keep us in countenance. They did at last, and filled us with jealousy, for they had all got into clean collars. Evidently they had been warned. I found myself sitting next to a tall, dark being, who was saying a great many pretty things about my country. "These roses are lovely," I ventured sleepily, looking down the row of decorated plates. "They are all yours," he replied, elegantly waving his hand and collecting a few of the nearest. That woke me up; I should need all my wits to cope

with this symbolic talk. May I be forgiven for all the astonishing things I said of England that night. Speeches began, and then my neighbour, producing an envelope and a pencil from his pocket, begged that I would sketch the speaker, a distinguished politician, that he might see my skill, and have a souvenir of the occasion. In vain to plead that flowers and decanters hid the view. A little avenue was cleared between our places. They had no mercy, and I did it. Two Jewish ladies had appeared, and we made common cause, and insisted on withdrawing before midnight. I went to bed with a sleepy muddled sort of notion that I had promised three distinct old gentlemen that I would permit them to conduct me round the grounds at seven next morning, as well as my neighbour, that he might show me over the baths at the same hour.

I must pause here, and bestow a little praise upon the true patriotism of Miranda and myself. We knew that our appearance, words, and gestures, which were all being noted down as typical of feminine England, would be much commented on, and pass into tradition. An awful sense of responsibility forced us out of our deadly torpor, and strung

up our jaded faculties to cope with an alarmingly varied conversation that skimmed lightly over European politics and the nature of that strange and fascinating being, woman. We were anxious to contradict the notions of our national angularity, which the Magyars had picked up through literature, and we like to believe that we succeeded.

Sunlight floods the world very early on a summer morning in Hungary, so that in spite of our overnight ordeal, by seven o'clock we had breakfasted, escaped into a little market and made many sketches, had followed a mysterious religious procession through the streets, and were ready for the start. The recollection of those three appointments was so very misty in the morning, I really did not remember the where or the when of the rendezvous, and should not have known the faces of the gallant old gentlemen by daylight; so my conscience was quite easy, until, as we stepped into the carriage to drive away, my neighbour of the dinner-table came up breathless. "I have searched everywhere! You have seen nothing—the baths, the pavilion, the park! and all magnificent! Permit me the honour of presenting these as a souvenir," and he slipped two large photographs of the place into my

hand. Perhaps it was foolish, not to have inspected one of the first mineral baths in Hungary; but the country owns them by hundreds, and we did our duty later by visiting seventeen.

After an hour or so of railway, we reached Trencsén, usually a quiet country town, with barracks, but now aroused to a pitch of wild excitement by the arrival of the Royal Buda-Pest Karpathian Society, whom the fine ruin of a castle, frowning over the town, had tempted. An irregular procession of the inhabitants escorted us from the station; and as we entered the principal street, a lady in a panting condition caught hold of my arm, and began in fluent English, "I have run all the way from the station; I was too late for the train, so I took a short cut back and caught you here. I heard that English ladies were to come with the Society, and I teach English; it is eight years since I have heard the sound of it, not since I left Bohemia; how do I speak?" She not only spoke extremely well, there was something so homely and comfortable about her that I could have hugged her. All must admit that a woman who made more use of her opportunities never lived. When, after sweltering in the sun up the treeless

hill and over the castle, we assembled in a hotel for dinner, she joined us again with several smart young officers under her wing, her pupils, I suspect, whom she introduced; and although no English came of it, a good deal of dancing did. The Danes were anxious to see some national dances, and several shy peasants were caught, and carried in, struggling and kicking, only to dash out again. So after this failure the whole company attempted the csárdás, and in the fulness of their hearts the officers took down some festive banners from the walls, and presented the foreigners with the national colours. A large portion of the population cheered us to the station, the gipsies playing the Rákoczi march before us. A multitude of names were signed in pencil on our banners, which I look at wonderingly now without being able to fix one to a face; but the teacher of English I still remember. The next sunrise saw us again in Buda-Pest.

CHAPTER V.

CONCERNING HUNGARIANS.



A MAGYAR YOUTH.

IT seems to me that it would be well at this point to say something about the different races that are scattered about Hungary, as well as about the constitution of Magyar society itself: so I propose to get all useful information over in this chapter. I began to realize how vague popular notions must be on these points, when the more educated portion of our acquaintance, having heard of our travels, inquired how we liked the Czechs, and when

I most delicately hinted—for no one likes to be put right—that we had not visited Bohemia, but had

found the Magyars delightful, they hastily added they believed Austrians to be most pleasant.

The true Hungarians are the Magyars, and the Magyars only; but, alas! they number less than half the population of the country. The four principal races that go to make up the larger half are the Slavs, the Roumanians, the Jews, and the gipsies or Tziganes. Besides these, there are thriving German colonies dotted about the land, which have been called in from time to time in Hungary's history to revive industries, and have preserved their language, their own press, and, in some instances, their own laws. There are, too, a few villages inhabited by Italians, who have been imported to revive architecture, and still retain many national characteristics. The Slav and Roumanian races form mainly an irregular fringe along the frontiers. They are to be found in all mountainous regions, where the Magyars, who are essentially dwellers of the plain, refuse to live. In some districts they are loyal subjects, but more frequently they consider themselves as under a foreign yoke, and dream of a day when the frontier shall contract and leave them with the races beyond the mountains. We saw nothing of the life of these alien

racés, and only so much of their picturesque exteriors as would fall to the lot of the ordinary traveller, did the species exist in those regions. It would therefore be an impertinence on my part to attempt to speak of their characteristics or habits. When we did come across these colonies, it was to note a change of dress and type, and pass on. But the large Roumanian districts through which we passed left a distinct impression of classic grace, dirt, and a good deal of disease, which pointed to a lower state of morality than that existing in the Magyar villages. The Jewish element, on the other hand, is intimately mixed up with the Magyar social life. Hebrews are sprinkled thickly over the country, with the exception of parts of the great plain and the peasant capital of Debreczen, where the natives have been too practical to allow them much footing. In every village there is an inn, kept by a Jew, which has a reputation for filth. In the smaller towns all the principal shops have Hebrew names inscribed over them, and, roughly speaking, trade lies in the hands of the Jews. Near the northern frontier Polish Jews swarm, who are at once touching and disgusting objects. In long, dirt-encrusted, black garments, with greasy fore-

locks and shaved heads, they glide quietly about the gay crowds, with a patient stoop of the shoulder, a pinched, dejected look on their acute features. They are eager, I am told, to Magyarise themselves, and make loyal subjects and citizens; but the day when a Hungarian will be able to look a Jew in the face, without a thrill of disgust, is as yet far off. Often, of course, they are justifying this hatred by still carrying on their old game of corrupting and ruining the peasants. Such of their number as move among the upper classes of society often show a bumptiousness and want of delicacy, which, although it is the natural outcome of their history, cannot fail to be offensive to the tactful and proud Magyars. Of the Tziganes I shall have much to tell in another place.

Hungarian society may, with fair accuracy, be said to consist of four classes: 1. The upper nobles or magnates; 2. The lesser nobles; 3. The bourgeois; 4. The peasants.

The great Hungarian families form regular clans. The title passes equally to all the children, and, as there is very rarely an entail of property, it is equally divided among all the members of a family, and thus it constantly happens that

estates have dwindled out of all proportion to the title. It would be hard to find more naturally gifted beings than the Magyar magnates. As a rule they speak several foreign languages with ease, are acquainted with the literatures of most countries, have one and all a special gift for music, and a strong, though undeveloped, artistic vein. They are usually good horsemen and keen sportsmen, possess social ease and grace of manner, and are among the best dancers in the world. It is from among their ranks too that England's warmest admirers are recruited. Towards one another or to strangers they are genial and hospitable to a degree, towards their inferiors, courteous and tactful; nevertheless pride of race is strong, and the social barriers sharply defined.

The lesser nobles correspond more to our old county-families than to anything else, being the descendants of the earliest land proprietors, who claimed the rank of free men and received the patent of nobility. There is no possibility of adding to their numbers. Most of these families have lost their estates, and many are extremely poor, and you may chance on a house in the country where the inmates are living little better

than the peasants, and yet at the same time see all the linen embroidered with a five-spiked coronet, a coat of arms upon the wall, and unmistakable signs of race upon the faces. These families have never enjoyed titles, but they are naturally proud of their right to blazon the coronet, which proclaims them pure Magyars, and of a rank the merely rich can never hope to attain.

The bourgeois class is far less interesting, being very little recruited from true Hungarians. Until quite lately all commerce was in the hands of the Jews and Germans, and it is hard for a stranger to discriminate between the Hungarian speaking foreigner, and the Magyars who have risen from the peasant ranks, or dropped down as it were from the classes above.

To the peasants I shall frequently have occasion to allude. They are endowed with some of the finest qualities of the Magyar, and combine a proud freedom of bearing with the gentlest manners, and a simple friendliness that is most winning. Though perfectly free, a good deal of the old feudal feeling lingers on, and still influences the mutual relationship of master and servant. They still kiss the hands of their superiors, employ deferential

manners of speech, and meet a tone of rough paternal authority from the nobles with good-humoured docility, and still obey rather arbitrary commands that are more the outcome of custom than strictly legal.

The social condition of a country may be judged by its women, and it is to the women of Hungary that we owe some of our pleasantest memories. In matters of education they are where our grandmothers were, and their position is inferior to that of the men. There is something patriarchal about family life in Hungary; the head of the family is so very completely the head! Among the peasants this is more particularly so, where he employs the second person singular in addressing his women-kind, although they must employ the plural in addressing him. Though the Magyar husband and father is a master, he is an extremely tender-hearted and courteous one, and very seldom abuses his power. The peasant will allow his wife to put on his boots, or stand while he eats; but he will address her in such terms as "My little pigeon," "Star of my heaven," and his sense of chivalry will not permit her to do rough out-door work. It must be confessed that the peasant women are as a rule plain

and thick-featured. On the other hand, in the upper classes, the beauty and fascination of the women are remarkable. Their charm is strongly felt by all travellers, and one susceptible son of Gaul declares that there is witchcraft in their very skin, and that once touch the hand of a Hungarian lady and you are forced to become her slave for life. The characteristics that impressed us most were goodness and gaiety. Now goodness with us has often a dreariness and angularity about it. We have written it upon ruled lines, and forgotten to rub them out. With the Magyar women it is a natural grace. Devotion to duty seems to go hand in hand with a frankness and light-heartedness that has nothing of frivolity in it. They have a freedom from malice that is infinitely refreshing, and are possessed of very innocently coquettish ways. There must naturally be many exceptions, but I speak of the general impression which we received. How ladies, who enjoyed the graces of life, could tolerate the looking-glasses that abound throughout the length and breadth of the land, was a matter of constant wonder to us. From the mirrors in the prima donna's dressing-room at the opera, to those in the plainest inns, we never met one that was not

absolutely distorting. Being of the feminine gender this trifle naturally impressed us.

In Hungary a very pretty standard of manners is kept up between married people, even between those who have jogged along together for many years of humdrum existence. For the most part the women expect very little. In the less prosperous families they take it quite simply that the men should be better dressed, better educated, and should require an element of amusement in their lives which they would never ask for themselves. When amusement, however, comes in their way, they can throw themselves into it with all the abandon of children, or rather of unspoiled children. Naturally, among the rich, where the comforts of this life are plentiful, things are more equal in the matter of amusement.

The etiquette which prevails, respecting courtship or marriage, seems to be a kind of compromise between those in vogue in France and in England. Magyar maidens have too much sentiment and too much spirit to fall in with the materialism and worldly wisdom of the French system, and the majority of them are too virtuous to look for their romance after marriage. On the other hand, they are too well trained in habits of submission, and too

full of reverence for older heads, to take matters completely into their own hands, as English girls usually do. Neither, of course, has their education given them the opportunities for sharpening their perceptive faculties, which would alone make liberty safe or desirable.

One of the lasting impressions that intercourse with Hungarians left upon our minds was moral cleanness. I find this characteristic commented on by French and Italian writers, which somewhat reassures me that we had not seen only a particularly sunny side of life. During our wanderings we saw very few outward signs of vice, deformity, or disease. That these impulsive, warm-blooded people are given to frequent irregularities of conduct, there can be no doubt; but the Magyars are still young, still have a touch of the barbarian about them, are still emotional creatures of natural and healthy instincts, and their vices have nothing in common with the corruption of over-civilization. It says a good deal for a people that the streets of their town are entirely free from the indecencies that sometimes mar the pleasure of a walk in London and most foreign capitals. Another lasting impression was the extraordinary likeness in manner, dress

and tastes, between Magyars and Englishmen. But this likeness does not sum up the whole Magyar. There is an utterly un-English side to him ; a depth of sadness and misery, a frenzy of gaiety, that his music has the power of evoking. Perhaps more surprising than the swiftness with which he passes from sadness to mirth, is the fact that behind both is a backbone of quiet force and solidity stronger than either.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE ALFÖLD.

AT the end of our three days' rush through the valley of the Waag, both Miranda and I had an imperious longing to get off into one of those primitive mountain villages, and quietly absorb as much of the spirit of the place as our minds would hold. Our friends were much more ambitious for us, and would not hear of it. The president of our late expedition unfolded an enticing scheme. His duties as sanitary inspector called him on frequent journeys all over the kingdom. He was just about to start on a tour to the eastern extremity of the great plain in the Comitatus of Bihar Megye, and as on these occasions he quartered himself in his friends' houses, it struck him that if we followed his guidance we should get an excellent idea of some aspects of country life and Hungarian households. The president was an ideal tourist, with the kindness and years of a father, and the spirits of a schoolboy,

and the whole arrangement seemed to us so lucky, that we began, in English fashion, to wonder how we had deserved it. If we had a misgiving, it was on the score of language; he spoke no French, and our German barely covered the necessities. As we left Buda-Pest by a night express, for it was altogether too hot to travel in the daytime, I clasped a small German and English dictionary very tightly, for the first time fully realizing what it was to be without an interpreter. A great copper-coloured moon floated in the pale indigo sky, as hour after hour we rushed through the awful flatness of the Alföld.

At about a quarter to four in the morning, we tumbled out at a tiny wayside station, and giving our traps to a peasant, started off in full sunlight on a road ankle deep in powdery brown dust. Neither Miranda nor I then knew the name of the station (Mihályfalva), or where we were going, and no one who has not travelled in this delightful parcel-post fashion can know the piquancy of it. We had seen the president despatch two telegrams over night at the station, which were evidently to announce our arrival somewhere. He pointed his stick ahead and gave us a nod, and we trudged on

over a mile or so of broad brown road, devoid of footpath, with white, dark roofed cottages straggling on either side. We came to a larger whitewashed building, and he rapped at a green door. The inmates were evidently sound asleep, though the village was beginning to stir. At length a sleepy boy opened the door, and disclosed the interior of a chemist's shop, and shuffling off, with amazement on his face, was soon followed by a very old man in spectacles and dressing-gown. Country telegrams sometimes loiter by the way, and our appearance was the first intimation the poor apothecary had that breakfast for three would be demanded of his hands. He brought us chairs in the road while matters were arranged within; but soon a little old lady came tripping out and gave us a welcome that had quite a motherly touch about it. She brought us water to wash in and spread a table in the sunshine of a courtyard. Some calves frisked about at the far end, and peasants passed to and fro with pails, while we sat in the shade of trees, and drank a pale fusion of tea, and ate a species of sausage and some cherries which she told us with pride that her son had sent her as a present.

That little household, with its gentle provincial

ways and innocently proud chatter of the son, who wrote for the newspapers, of which we had a glimpse for exactly one hour, forms as complete a picture in my memory as some little sketch by Myrbach or Rossi straying in the letterpress of a French romance. What is the secret gift Hungarians have of never being insignificant? Of the hundreds of faces I met and talked with, not one has become faded or blurred. The little lady could not apologise enough for not having foreseen this visitation, and was quite affectionate as she helped us to climb into a peasant's cart and waved us off on our travels. These carts deserve a special word. They are long and narrow, and roughly made of wood, innocent of springs, and the back and front wheels are firmly joined by a stout pole, with a view to making them strong enough for the roads. Miranda and I had a sort of lounge of straw spread on the planks. As the pace quickened we began to wonder if any constitution could resist this shaking. It was difficult to exchange remarks as our teeth were clashed forcibly together at every other word, and soon our hair was hopelessly down our backs.

The road stretched straight ahead over the great plain, and acres of sunflowers and maize lay on

either side. The sun began to make itself felt, and the dust began to rise. No grass grew by the road sides. We passed through thirsty-looking villages, where dirt-coloured palings came to the edge of the dirt-coloured road, each with its white towered Calvinist church; but although no flowers or gardens were visible, the peasant youths, with large Bibles tucked under their arms, had fresh scarlet flowers in their hats, and the women who rattled along, actually singing hymns, in those springless carts, were gay with nose-gays. We pulled up in most of these villages, and the president got down and exchanged a few words with the pastor or school-master over the roadside palings, who eyed us curiously as we sat, and we wondered if this were a sanitary inspection or a friendly visit. He always wrote something in a note-book before we started onwards, which looked suspiciously official, and Magyars have no prejudice against doing a little business on a Sunday. At about one o'clock we came upon a somewhat larger village, with the same dusty look about it. The faint blue line of distant hills showed we were near one edge of the plain. We were in Margita, which looks quite important on the map, and is of more consequence than its

appearance at first sight seems to warrant. We drove under a white archway, ornamented with a coat of arms, into a yard, round two sides of which ran a low colonnaded house. A man servant in military uniform began extricating us and our baggage from the straw, and in a minute we were shaking hands with the magistrate of the Department and his wife. Round her skirts clung two soft-eyed little children, who overcame their shyness sufficiently to kiss our hands. Several clerks emerged from the magistrate's office to join the group, and one or two fine, substantial young men sauntered up, who appeared to be in some way related to the family. I shall ever remember one on account of a white waistcoat, spotted over with dogs' heads the size of small teacups, on which he invited public criticism at the dinner table, saying he had bought it in the village. We struggled bravely with our parts of speech during dinner, and Madame unfolded from her memory some French phrases of her school-girl days. I openly spread my dictionary by my plate, the situation was too serious to allow of vanity, and with a little help from all the clerks round the table, by the end of the meal we had told them something of English habits, and satisfied the

owner of the waistcoat on the coinage system. Even Sándor, the man who waited skilfully in white cotton gloves, joined in an occasional laugh at our difficulties. As we rose we all shook or kissed one another's hands, and then our hostess led us off for a siesta, and asked if our parents were not terribly anxious at our coming so far from home. We all sat under the colonnades, sipping coffee towards the sunset hour, and Miranda and I wondered vaguely if we were to spend the night here. It was a difficult question to ask, or seemed so to our English notions. There was a settled look about the president which seemed to point that way.

Our host, seeing our eagerness to sketch anything and everything, withdrew in company with Sándor, and returned shortly, in all the splendour of the national costume befitting his rank as a magistrate and member of a noble family. He seemed to have gained several inches in the dress, and looked like some majestic creature who had suddenly stepped from the middle ages; the slant rays of the sun gilding the white eagle's feather in his cap, the heavy folds of his velvet cloak setting off the broad build of his shoulders, while gold tasselled top-boots of a cunning cut, gave a most shapely look to his

leg and foot. The dress seemed to have called to life all the pride and fire latent in his easy-going face, to have suddenly aroused the reverse side of



the Magyar. These garments are only worn upon state occasions. The form never changes, but the colour and jewels vary with the family. I can hardly imagine a finer sight than a regiment of nobles, mounted on horses draped in their respective colours, riding along in the sunlight; and such a spectacle, I am told, is still to be seen on royal occasions. When night fell, a barefooted peasant maid led us to the

middle room of a suite, where two massive beds stood against the wall, head to heel. She placed two basins of water upon chairs, put towels beside

them, kissed our hands, and carefully fastening one door, closed the other softly behind her.

We stayed several days with these delightful people; but that was the result of a calamity, and not the president's original intention. Our host had an official visit to pay at a magistrate's house, some twenty miles distant, and invited us to accompany him. We set out at seven in the morning in two carriages, telling madame we should be home for supper. During a drive of several hours I tried to get at the secret of those roads. Now and again we followed one that was worthy the name, and had been well mended with stone, and then branched off on to a wild, unreclaimed sort of tract. It seems that certain main roads are in the hands of the State, and do get attended to, though at enormous expense, as the stone has to be brought from great distances; while the care of other bye-roads rests with the nobles, who are too idle, or with the peasants, who are too poor, to mend them. The district is thinly populated, to our notions at least, and people are accustomed to build carts to suit the roads, and to expect a spice of adventure in a simple ride. Our way lay mainly through Roumanian villages, all in the keeping of the children, for the

elders were away in the fields. They sat in circles in the road, playing at school, their little smooth brown limbs protruding from white embroidered shifts. A species of verandah runs round two sides of many of the cottages, and under its shelter stand the beds of the family. It is the custom in the Alföld to sleep thus out of doors, until the winter's cold renders it impossible. I noticed several beds with occupants, so that the sick, too, seemed to conduct their cases under the public gaze.

Ours was by no means the only carriage that drew up before an Italian-looking house, standing among gentle hills. It seemed there was a meeting of the magistrates of the country side. There was a little flutter of surprise among the ladies, at the addition to the party brought by the magistrate of Margita. In a friendly confidential way they took our arms, and led us to see their latest interests—a rough bath, constructed in the splash of a waterfall that came rushing ice cold from the wooded hills, and the three weeks old baby, whose mother was running about with the best of them. The assembled magistrates sat round a table on the verandah, and the malefactors, among whom figured many Tziganes, hung about in sulky groups, await-

ing their turn. **Business** was all disposed of before we sat down to dinner in a vast **room**, and then down came such a thunderstorm and such rain as



A MALEFACTOR.

made us stare at one another in a sort of despair of ever getting home that night. Darkness fell, and no one who valued their lives or their horses would

take to such roads under the circumstances. The poor president, who had been growing more and more silent, announced that he felt very ill, and was taken off and put to bed. Somehow the party was stowed away for the night. There was a great opening and shutting of doors; ladies and maid-servants ran about with linen and pillows, of which there seemed an inexhaustible supply somewhere. The best quarters, as usual, fell to Miranda and myself. We anxiously scanned the president's face next morning. He was in a high fever and shook his head dolefully to inquirers, saying he must get home at once; so, bidding good-bye to our hospitable host, who looked just a trifle relieved, we set out in spite of a threatening sky. I rode in the magistrate's carriage that the invalid might have a place in the softer one, and we often pulled up while I jumped down and took a hasty peep into cottages, deserted for the day, but with doors unbarred, or standing open. Square white stoves, rough earthen floors, and a bench or so, hardly suggest comfort, yet many of them had little more than these. We made one halt before a large ancient-looking farm, that must once, to judge by its looks, have been a monastery, and an old man, who also

had an indefinably ecclesiastical air, took us down to visit some vast cellars, where we walked along an avenue of wine butts bearing dates some hundreds of years back. He invited us to taste freely of these old wines, and we both thought the opportunity sadly thrown away on such cautious and amateur palates.

Once back in Margita, the president again went to bed, and poor madame's anxiety was increased considerably when I was overtaken by such a headache that I too had to lie down. I fell asleep, and woke suddenly with a consciousness of some one in the room. There was no one in sight, but when I looked behind me I saw a man's face watching me with keen scrutiny. "Fräulein," he said gravely, "there must be no headaches so far from home." Then I recognised the village doctor, whose family had already made much of us, and heaped us with roses and boughs laden with red and white currants. I pulled my little dictionary from under the pillow, and we tried to have a consultation, but we could not arrive at anything precise, so decided it was the "sun," and left the malady to nature.

Next day the president still lay low, and Miranda and the magistrate went to a farm-house, where he

had business to transact, and where she tells me that she spent the most delightful day of the whole trip, though I know she says it because I was not there to contradict her. Towards the middle of the day the president grew desperate at his case, and told us he must go back to Buda-Pest; but thoughts of us and our frustrated tour depressed him greatly. He got out a map and showed me the town in the north, where we were to meet Julian a week later, wrote a note to a doctor there, which he told me to deliver on our arrival, and gave madame injunctions to write out our journey for us. Then he was driven to the station, and I waved him adieu with sincere sorrow, for he had been a genuine friend to us, and I turned back into the house with madame. We had a little feminine afternoon; she and the doctor's lady took paper patterns of sundry of my garments, which hit their fancy as English. Then they sang me songs, and we visited the village pottery, where two barefooted youths, at a primitive wheel, in a tiny room, were turning out such shapes as we somehow can't manage to arrive at in England, with all our appliances. We were pressed to prolong our visit until we had at least heard from Julian, who was to carry us off to visit his parents'

home; but we felt that our kind hostess had already been tried enough by her self-invited guests, who could not speak her language, and over whose apparently helpless condition she could not but be anxious. Miranda and I decided to start for the north on the morning of the fourth day. To tell the truth we felt just a little nervous at the thoughts of this journey across country, where even German would be of little value.

**GIPSY.**

CHAPTER VII.

SÁTRA UJHELY.

THE train had the inconsiderateness to start before four in the morning, and we had the stupidity to get to the station much too early, thereby unnecessarily rousing a number of peasants fast asleep on their benches under their sheepskins. Madame's unfailing kindness brought her to the station. She had written out the names of our changes, not one of which we could pronounce,—let the reader try a few Hungarian names before despising us,—and seeing sleep clearly written in our faces, she instructed the guard to waken us and turn us out at the next station, and to leave word there that we did not understand Hungarian. In twenty minutes' time we were bundled out, with three hours to while away somehow, before the next train.

The sun was well above the horizon by now, and quite a crowd of peasants had mustered round

the station. They formed a close circle around us, open-mouthed, and at last, after some scuffling, a young man in the smartest of zouaves and whitest of linen was pushed forward, and with a courteous bow and winning smile began a voluble address. We could only shake our heads, and his crestfallen and defeated look as he dived to the back of the crowd again, went to our hearts. Soon another representative was pushed forward, a Jew this time, in "civilized" garments, and put three bold direct questions in German. What was our nationality? Where did we come from? Where were we going? He returned triumphant, and we heard the satisfying word, "Angöl" (English), banded from mouth to mouth. At least twenty times that day did we reply to such concise catechisms; the railway-guard, however, instituted a more minute inquiry. But we wanted a little quiet for those three hours, and nodding farewell to the crowd, stepped out towards a distant village, picking our way through a group of workmen at breakfast, who were squatting about the dusty road, a mass of ochre-coloured garments and sprawling tanned limbs. Barefooted peasants called out "Jonapot" (good morning), as they passed us, and we confidently

sang back "Jonapot," sure of that one word. The village was hardly astir, and we sat on a rough bench, and gazed across the brown muddy road, down the long line of clean, unpicturesque cottages, with their gaunt gallows-like wells. The storks had built freely in the chimneys, and the sparrows were making noisy colonies round their nests. We should have gone to sleep in the early sunshine, but a group of pretty long-eyed girls came close, and felt our garments, and began to speak. Then we fled, for how might this village deal with its first foreign guests, who might be—heaven knew what.

At about midday we reached Debreczen, one of the largest towns after Buda-Pest. By this time we had realized that it was impossible to pass unnoticed. When the guards had finished their inquiries they brought the principal passengers in the train through our carriage in turn, to have a peep at us; but we thought that in so large a town we might get a quiet stroll. Not so; at every other step, a shop owner, or a loungee in front of a café, stepped up and politely but firmly begged us to stand and deliver our nationality. One old gentleman came shopping with us bareheaded—for we had some innocent little purchases to make. Of Debreczen

itself I shall speak later on, when we visited it under different auspices. Once back at the station a venerable white-haired individual asked in French if he could take our tickets for us. He had heard a rumour of foreigners being in the town, and had come to see if he could be of use. "Well, it isn't easy to go wrong when a whole nation interests itself in your journey," exclaimed Miranda. "There wouldn't be much chance for us if we were trying to escape."

From Debreczen we got into an express that was bound for Galicia. We swept through the Tokay country, home of the famous wine, with its vine-clad hill and silver river, and as the sun got low in the sky we grew a little nervous at the idea of arriving in the dark at a strange doctor's, on whom we hadn't the smallest claim, and firmly decided to go to a hotel. There must be a decent one in a small town; and if the proprietor is not accustomed to receive ladies unattended, he would have to make the best of it. I can safely say our luck never deserted us, and at this moment it was distinctly in the ascendant. The train had stopped at a wayside station to allow time for a little refreshment. We were strolling on the platform

when a gentleman passed us, and looked hard at the tickets in my hand. Then he raised his hat, and said in English, "I am also travelling to Sátra Ujhely, and shall be glad to assist you in any way. I recognised you, for I once saw you eating fruit on the steps by the Danube, and I have read of your travels in the newspapers." His manner was so gentle and courteous that we at once told him of our predicament, and asked advice on a hotel. There was a look of infinite compassion in his eyes at what seemed to his Hungarian notions our forlorn situation. He told us we should have no trouble. The relief of hearing English was so great that we felt as if we had found a long-lost brother. He told us a great deal on the hopes and prospects of Hungary. I caught sight of his ticket when the guard came round. It was to quite another place. This surprising knight-errant was positively coming out of his way on our account. The guard remained in the corner of a carriage, with folded arms, and eyes rivetted on our faces.

"Why doesn't he move?" we asked, growing nervous.

"He has asked to watch you a little; he has never seen living English ladies before, and if you will

travel further on his line he will give you the best carriage and see to your comforts," came the answer.

Once at Sátra Ujhely, we rattled over the stony streets in the hotel omnibus, our knight in attendance. He leaped out first, and had a conference with the proprietor, then he handed us out, and told us that everything was arranged, that he should be gone before we were up in the morning, and might never have the pleasure of meeting us again, but he hoped our memories of his beloved country would always be pleasant ones. He dwells in our memories as a living expression of the spirit of young Hungary, whose patriotism is a religion.

Soon after sunrise next morning the noise of a brisk market arose beneath our windows, and from the balcony we could get a fine view of the little jumbled, rambling town, gay with daubed signs and sparkingly clear in the sun, backed by steep vine-clad hills. In the street below, Polish Jews thronged; one or two stood like solitary black birds mounting guard over yards of cloth and prints spread out flat in the dust for sale. No species of ware disdained the road as a setting, and fruit, cheeses, hats, boots, and crockery were heaped about in promiscuous fashion. It was Friday, and, ac-

According to arrangement, Julian was not to arrive till the following Wednesday, and meanwhile he was without an address, wandering among the mountains, bent on geological discoveries, and believing us to be roaming over the plain, under the president's wing. Nothing could exceed the deference and fostering care of the hotel staff. Evidently our knight-errant had left minute instructions that we were to be cared for till our friends came. The head-waiter disturbed us a little by inquiring after every post if we had received news. It was evident that he expected our rescue hourly, and we, conscious that it was many days distant, felt that his anxiety would become too acute. Our knight-errant had done more than that. Finding on inquiry that the doctor we were in search of was away from home, he had sent a message to his "locum tenens" to do his best for us. We were a long while getting at this explanation, and not a little mystified when a gentleman arrived in a carriage and pair, and offered to show us the neighbouring points of interest. We took a road that serpented round the base of the hills, and looked over a broad river, and the infinite plain stretching green and fertile, flecked with herds of white cattle here and

there; the little hill of Tokay, alone darting up its blue head to disturb the uniform flatness. From north to south the Alföld stretches some 2,000 English miles, and is the home of all that is most essentially Magyar. In its loneliness and vastness it has been the inspiration of the saddest songs, the most piercing music. We came upon Sárás-Patak, a little town pressing down to the water edge, on the hill side of the river. It is the seat of the famous university, which presented the appearance of a gigantic seminary for priests, being a somewhat barrack-like whitewashed building. The Tziganes and the dregs of the population had built themselves cabins on the shelves and in the crannies of rocks overhanging the river. To all appearances a sudden gust of wind might sweep the whole colony into the water, but the women and children were popping in and out of their holes, as happy as rabbits in a warren. Crowning a sheer cliff rose the ruined towers of Rákoczi's castle, at sight of which every Magyar heart must beat a little faster. We climbed up on to the battlements, and seemed to sweep half Hungary at a forward glance, while behind rose the tributary chains of the Carpathians in firm, gentle curves. The people love the memory of the hero-

prince who struck for freedom and fell in battle, and picturesque legends still cluster round him—while the “Rákoczi March,” the most stirring of all national music, keeps his name a household word. Yet this march, like most of the finest Magyar songs, has no distinct begetter, but formed itself, as it were, from fragments and snatches flung out from time to time by soldiers in heroic struggle. Touch a Hungarian deeply enough, and music flows naturally from him.

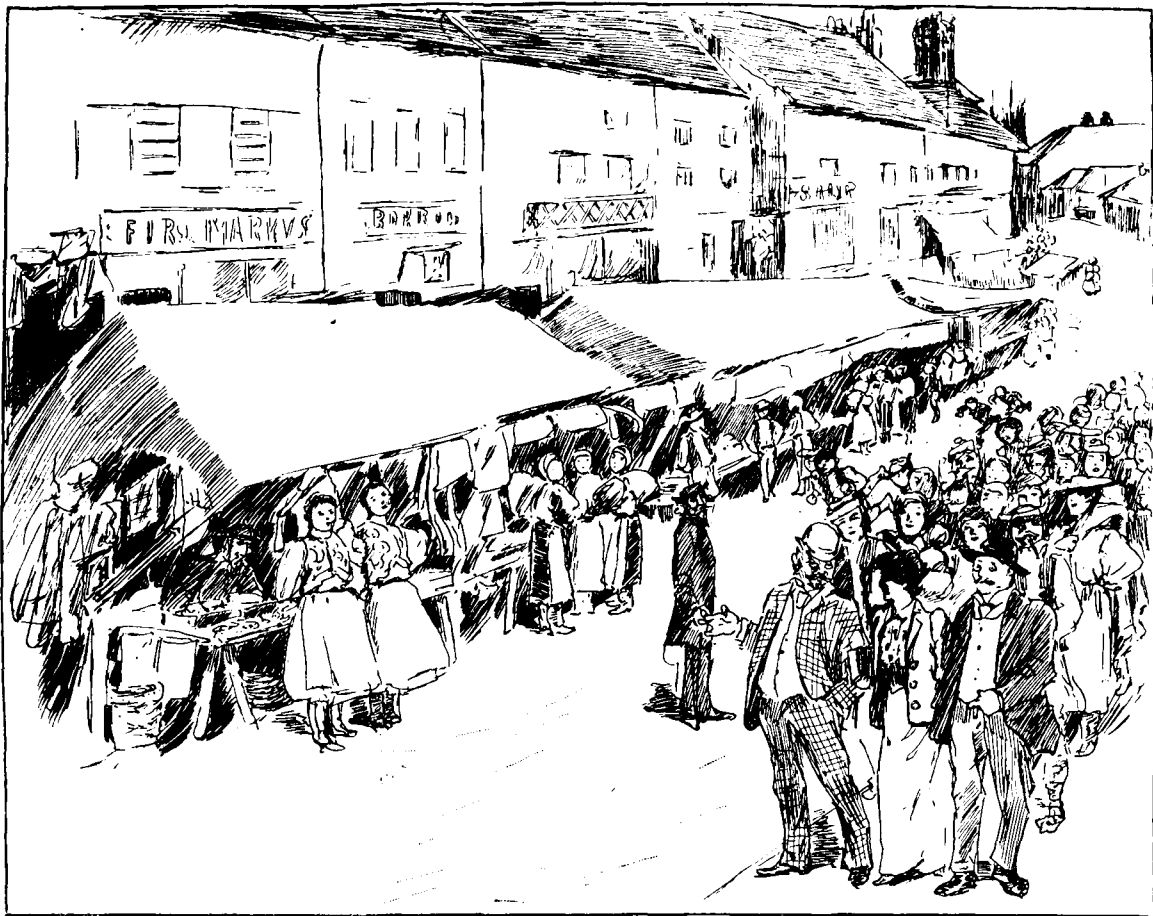
The ruined castle is joined to a modern château by a piece of Italian architecture, with open staircase and colonnade. The whole belongs to a German duke, and is stocked with German servants. As we passed through the old vaulted banqueting hall, a cloud of doves flew away through the gaping windows, and two colossal wooden figures of mediæval workmanship, which were planted on the rough earth on either side the fireplace, gave a grotesque touch to the desolation. Our kind escort, like the head waiter, being convinced that we should be fetched away any moment, determined to do his part thoroughly, and although it was growing late, drove us back through Sátra-Ujhely to a farmhouse lying some miles away on the other side, the birth-place of the hero. A stream of lumpy, sleepy-

looking water circled a large, damp, rotting old building, and fluffy pollard willows grew on its banks. The place looked dreary enough now, but the massive rafters and thick walls and vast fireplaces bore witness to past comforts. On entering, we started up a rustic-looking couple feeding on pork and brown bread, who did the honours and gave us a depressing account of their difficulties when the river rises and floods the floors. In the river, the willows and the dampness there was something so English that it gave me a touch of home sickness.

On the second day of our stay neither Miranda nor I could disguise from ourselves the fact that the people in the street looked at us in rather a hostile sort of way. It was Saturday, and the shops being in the hands of the Jews were all closed, and squads of undersized youths paraded the streets in ordinary dress. Miranda, who was never seen without her sketch-book, had strolled out to do a little work. She had been gone a very short time, when an unusual hum of voices brought me on to the balcony in time to see her coming quickly along with a formidable escort of men, and followed by a large rabble.

“Well, I never was in such a funny fix in my life,” she exclaimed, bursting into the room. “Just imagine, I was sketching under a sort of arched doorway; the people began to crush round, of course, and hid everything, so I had a try at them, and did one or two, and then some gentlemen pushed through and looked over my shoulder. They ordered the crowd away and shut the gates, and there was I with these creatures, who began inspecting my book. Every other minute there was a bang at the door, and they let another man in, till I am sure I was surrounded by all the principal inhabitants. It seemed to me they were talking every language under the sun—and, well—you know my German—so there we were. They let me out in the end, and escorted me to the door; but it was odd, wasn’t it?”

We learned afterwards that we were suspected of being Russian spies, and that our story of being English travellers was thought to be a blind, and there was considerable alarm abroad on the subject. We should have been a trifle uneasy if we had known how matters stood; as it was, we only thought the people rather less courteous than usual, and longed for Julian’s appearance. At ten o’clock



that very night a smart rap came at our door, and the waiter, with a radiant face, handed in a card. It was Julian's. We raced down the corridor to see him standing there, in a holland suit, a knapsack on his back, and sunburned almost beyond recognition. Our mutual stupefaction kept us exclaiming, "How *did* you know we were here?" "How are *you* here so early? Where is the president?"

It seems a chance traveller in the mountains, meeting Julian, had told him the strange news, "Two English artists are down in Sátra-Ujhely."

"Not possible!" said he. "I know them; they are in the plain."

"I have seen them myself," said the traveller; "one is dark, and one is fair."

Then alarm filled Julian's mind, and our faithful friend came hurrying down to reassure himself, quartered himself with friends in the town, and again all began to go merrily.

We were speedily introduced to the chief magistrate and his family, who, hearing that we had been some days in the town already, made up for lost time by asking us to dinner to meet some of the pleasantest people in the place, and then driving us off to see a village dance. One of the most enjoyable

things in Hungarian country life is the enormous distances that have to be got over for pleasure or business. This sounds paradoxical, and I admit that in England it would hardly constitute a charm; but there horses go at a rate that would fairly astonish our coachmen, and manage distances they would think impracticable. To go at a splendid pace through wild scenery is not to my mind the same thing as a cautious amble along a highly civilized and domesticated country road. A wedding had taken place that morning in a little village over the hills, and the magistrate, with a view to giving us pleasure, had sent them permission to dance. Now a dance with the peasants means the csárdás and the csárdás only, and of this unique and distinct performance I despair of giving any picture in words. When we suddenly rounded a corner and came upon a courtyard, which represented the ball-room, a mass of blazing colour beat upon our vision, seemingly from a bed of gigantic flowers rustling in the wind. The couples were closely packed together, and at that moment the only movement was a sort of shuffling reel step, so that a bubbling, seething surface, broken by the tall feathers and nodding flowers in the hats of the men, was all that met

the eye. The gipsies were standing on a bench by the wall, playing at a mad rate, and we perched beside them, and revelled in the picture before us. Then some *debonnaire* youths, wearing jaunty hats perched over one eye, decked with nasturtiums and peacocks' feathers, came up to us, grinning and gesticulating, and evidently asking us to dance. The magistrate nodded encouragingly, and nothing loth, we plunged down into the crowd with our fascinating partners. Mine held himself so upright with pride, I was afraid he would lose his balance backwards. A woman at his elbow obviously told him to remove a short curved pipe from between his teeth. He instantly pocketed it. He was so gentle, he might have been handling an egg-shell, and we were told afterwards that both our partners pitied us sincerely for being so thin. The stalwart peasant girls wear eight full skirts to dance in, which give them a majestic circumference, so no wonder our dimensions seemed insignificant. Perhaps that dance was the most forcible illustration of Magyar cleanliness that we had. The sun was scorchingly hot, the dancers were so closely packed together you could hardly have dropped a pin between them, and yet the air was as fresh and sweet as possible, and the most

delicate nose could have taken no offence. The music of the csárdás is the most alluring and irresistible in the world; but to appreciate the dance you must take part in it, for, to be frank, it is not beautiful to watch. The first movements are slow. The man places his hands on either side the woman's waist, while she places hers upon his shoulders, and they move to right and left with gentle steps, keeping very much on the same spot of ground; then, as the music quickens, he swings her round, first on one arm, then on the other, falling back to the original position again.

The music and steps grow continually faster, the girl's eight skirts and long ribbons swirl in the air, and the man breaks into strange cries, snapping his fingers above his head, like a Highlander dancing the "fling."



CHAPTER VIII.

LIFE IN A VICARAGE.

WE should not have chosen to arrive at the little vicarage of Pusztafalu late at night, soaked to the skin, plastered with mud, and unexpected.

Yet that is exactly what happened, and through our own obstinacy. We had set our minds on reaching Julian's home as soon as possible, and were quite deaf to the refusals of the Sátra-Ujhely coachman to drive us over the hills on a drenching wet day. The magistrate cut the matter short by commanding a Jewish proprietor to send a man and a two-horsed carriage with us. The Jew in revenge chose two of his sorriest nags, and we were well punished when we saw the poor exhausted brutes straining and panting in deep clay and mire. Within sight of our destination we all rolled over together in the dirt. The four of us got the carriage up somehow, bundled the luggage in again, and managed the rest of the way on foot, doing what we could to help the horses. It did not add to our peace of mind when we calculated that Julian's letter announcing our arrival could not possibly have reached its destination. The village lay in complete darkness as we pushed open a wooden gate and crossed the courtyard of—must I say the vicarage?—the word does not seem to fit. At the sound of wheels the door opened with a flood of light, and the thin, erect figure of a white-haired old man stood on the threshold. He led us through

the brick-floored entrance, with its square stove, into a low room, where the family sat at supper.

Although a country clergyman in Hungary is accustomed to welcome and house any stray travellers, our arrival was a little disconcerting so late at night. Julian's kind-faced mother, in a cotton gown, with her head bound in a handkerchief, helped us to wipe the mud from and dry our dripping garments, while she kept up a running conversation with her beloved son. Half an hour later we sat down at the table before bowls of milk, bread and sheep's cheese, and had leisure to look around us. By the light of the shaded lamp my eyes rested on the most beautiful face I saw in Hungary—the face of the old man. If you know the sensation of peace and healing with which, after a long course of newspaper reading or hysteric novels, you turn to the calm, sweet-mindedness of some old-world classic, you will know what it was to meet that face, after long familiarity with the average nineteenth century type. The regular closely-shaven features were sharp, obviously with the sharpness of suffering, and the lines about the mouth were traced by the gentle patience of years. Yet the underlying purpose of the face was something very different. It was a face at peace; but

through the mystic softness of the eyes, which were large and luminous in the surrounding pallor, flashed occasionally a glance of piercing intellectual keenness, and the upward sweep and quiver of the nostrils betrayed an ever-present sensitiveness. The fascination of that dual face held me, and as the days passed I liked nothing better than to watch the face of later years overlying as it were the other, yet occasionally broken up and illuminated by it. There were times when the austere old priest took out his violin, and bending over it lived again in the battle music and love songs of his youth; then a poetic passion flickered over his features, but it flickered over the mask of an ascetic. If it had not been for the exasperating barrier of language, the old man would have had much to tell us of the miseries and heroisms of the war in 1848, in which he served as an officer, and after which he had brought his noble name, his talents and ambitions to the obscurity of this mountain village. He could have told us too of bygone days when he went hunting and sleighing with his sons; and wolves, bears, and wild boars were quite common in the woods round the village. As it was, our conversation at this first supper was broken up with laughter, for his sense

of humour was keen ; and when he brought from the depths of his memory German phrases that had lain forgotten for forty years, and would *not* finish themselves, to confront ours that would never construct themselves, only one issue was possible. Béla, the son home from Buda-Pest, where he was studying for holy orders, came to the rescue as interpreter, for Julian was too busy with his mother, and "Lolly," a six-year-old grandson, was so amazed at the novel conversation over the table, that he left a spoon sticking out of his mouth for full five minutes while he stared at us, until Béla pulled it out and carried him off to bed.

Miranda and I slept in a little whitewashed room behind the entrance hall, whose window faced the church across the roadway. The house only differed from the peasants' cottages in having an extra room on either side, and tiles on the roof in place of thatch or wood. At about three in the morning we were aroused by the sound of tiny treble bells which seemed to be tinkling in our very ears. Peering through the green shutters we could see the cows and sheep being driven to pasture in the grey dawn. They brushed against the outer wall of our room, or stopped to bite at a tuft of grass beneath the window,

and made sleep a fitful and dreamy affair. Just as five o'clock came round, just as the sun was tingeing the hill-tops, the clanging tones of the church bell sounded out. When that ceased, the unmistakable noise of psalms from harsh and fervent voices came ringing through our room, for the church doors stood open, and Calvinist peasants are hearty in their daily devotions. The droning sound of prayers came next, then the men poured out from one door, the women from another, and dispersed to the day's work. After that a great calm fell upon the village.

When we stepped out into the sunshine two hours later, the old pastor was sitting on a straight-backed chair against the wall of the house reading the newspaper, in dress and figure curiously resembling Whistler's famous portrait of Carlyle. "Here in Pusztafalu we get news from London, and only five days late; you can't call us out of the world!" The German words seemed to be leaving his lips in slow automatic fashion, while he listened to the unwonted sound in amused wonder, and showed us a paragraph in Magyar, in which the one word "Salisbury" stood intelligible.

Across the wide, mouldy yard, with its little duck-pond and cow-shed, was a long strip of garden where

maize stood high, and at its far end, by the edge of a brook, was a summer-house, beyond which an orchard stretched up a hillside leading to distant mountains. Here, in the early morning, we used to carry our coffee and bread and lie under the apple trees by the summer-house door, writing our letters home, or dreaming the hours away to the sound of Julian's violin or the crooning of peasants in the distance.

During the eight days we spent at Pusztafalu, we lost all sense of time. When the sun got down, we so far bestirred ourselves as to climb up a hillside and sit in a cornfield where the bees droned in myriads, and look down on to the village in the hollow, and over to the volcanic hills opposite. Viewed from above, the cottages looked like the work of some giant child who had been at play with sticks and cards, and indeed from no point had they the merit of picturesqueness. Sometimes we wandered farther afield, and sat on rocks overlooking the great plain streaked with yellow corn. Teams of white oxen, yoked four to a wagon, came winding in slow procession along the roads beneath. Julian would perch on a steady stone above our heads, and the violin would wail out into

the night air till the moonlight etherealized the hills and washed the colours from the plain, and blotted out all hard edges with a gentle mist. Then he would lead the way home, playing all the while he scrambled nimbly down rocks and treacherous places, in true Tzigane fashion. The moon would be the only light in the village, and peasant youths would sit in silent lines or circles in their sheepskins and feathered Romeo caps. Julian sometimes gave them leave to sing, for noise was only made by special permission after night had fallen. Then they broke into sad quaint songs from the plain or from neighbouring districts, picked up in the years passed in the barracks, till all the watch-dogs in the village awoke and yelped, and the youths would vanish silently into the cottages, and the last lights disappear from the tiny windows.

During our stay a new village judge was elected and duly installed in office, the magistrate coming over for the purpose. As far as I could see, the ceremony took place in the pastor's yard. The assembly gathered for the purpose consisted of two policemen, in sort of burlesque military uniform and round felt hats decorated with the tail feathers of a cock, a deputation of villagers to nominate the

comrade they had selected, and the new judge himself, in sheepskin and top boots. The magistrate and pastor had a good deal to say to him on the duties and solemnities of his office, which he took meekly, looking into his hat the while. The rôle of village judge appears to be that of general referee and arbitrator in cases of dispute, and reporter of all criminal cases to the magistrate. He exercises a semi-parental authority over the peasants, who naturally consult their own advantage by electing as just and upright a man as they can find. Some decided sounds of hilarity came from the cottages later in the day, at which the magistrate smiled, remarking indulgently, "One expects them to get a little drunk on great occasions." We made a few attempts to sketch the village from the roadway, and were always surrounded by a friendly, gentle crowd of girls, who whispered together and carried bundled-up gurgling babies. The idea had got about somehow that we could talk Hungarian when we chose. This myth was flattering, and took very little to feed it, for we found that any stray ejaculations received immediate applause. On one occasion I was considerably startled to hear the words, "I say, missus," in the tones of a parrot. I looked round

everywhere for a bird, and found only a man with a triumphant grin on his face; but he had produced his masterpiece, and could not speak or understand another word. The explanation of this phenomenon is, that peasants very frequently go to America from the north of Hungary for two or three years of field labour, returning with enough money to buy a little land and marry, and with two or three words of English. You can imagine what prestige these experiences give them in the village community. Luckily the people of Pusztafalu found the mere fact of being sketched a compliment, and one bright flower of a girl was so touched by the attention that she stepped into the room where we sat one evening and handed us a tall cane of growing raspberries as a thank-offering.

On Sunday morning everything went, if possible, a little more leisurely. There was no work to be done. On week-days the pastor and his sons often went to distant fields and vineyards and laboured with the rest. The mother, too, had time to sit down a little, but her real happiness lay in busying herself from morning to night over the comforts of the family, helping in all the housework and hardly showing a sign of fatigue. The maid-servants were

very conscious of clean chemisettes, and had their "pig-tails" tied with bows of bright ribbon, sticking up like butterflies' wings, with ends reaching down to the hem of their skirts. As every one would be at leisure and in their best clothes, we meant to have a grand sketching. We were breakfasting in the summer-house as usual, when a hum of voices fell on our ears, and through the grass came a brilliant line of broadly smiling peasant girls, and groups of youths, a good deal more shy and well to the rear. The sight was sufficiently rousing to make me jump up suddenly and upset my easel and paraphernalia, which slightly amused the army of models. A spirit of covetousness arose within us as we sketched, and we grew eager to possess some of their clothes. Julian undertook to be a middle-man, and sat upon a camp stool jotting down in a note-book the prices of the material and what he thought fair sums for various garments. The girls were half-proud, half-reluctant to part with their bright things. I have a little jacket in my studio now, and I think as I look at it, well—I think one might as well try to bottle a sunbeam as try and reproduce one of those girls in England. I fancy we made church a little late that morning. When the bell had its orders

to begin, clergy and congregation trooped over in a body.

It was our first experience of one of those Calvinist churches of which we had passed hundreds. The floor, with the exception of a paved strip down the centre, was of soft rough earth, so that as you sat in the pews it was a distinct temptation to dig holes and scrape heaps together with your heels. There was an old-fashioned three-decker pulpit against the middle of one wall, and in front of it a table covered with a coloured cotton cloth, representing an altar. The only ornate thing in the building was the panelled ceiling, painted with curious devices. The sexes were strictly divided, and sat facing one another. Men and women alike were provided with small sweet-smelling nosegays, which they held about an inch from their chins and inhaled with an affectation of elegance ludicrously out of keeping with their honest sunburnt looks. Miranda and I were simultaneously aroused from a reverie by a little thud on our knees; two little bouquets had been slipped over our shoulders by the women behind us, so we followed the fashion and held them to our noses. Some remarkably harsh and hearty singing was followed by the appearance of Béla's innocent

THE GIRLS BID
US DANCE
WITH THEIR
SWEET-HEARTS.



young face above the pulpit board, and then the morning service was over. The afternoon service was even shorter, and then the day's merrymaking began.

Calvinism in Hungary has caught something genial from the people and lost its grimness, and no one saw anything to object to in a dance under the church walls. Three gipsies fiddled away, one on a violin with a large hole in it, which he frankly told us was the result of beating his father. We now had an opportunity of watching the introductory part of the *csárdás*, which is most ceremonious. The girls stood in a group at a little distance from the youths, who, as the music struck up, began to walk round in a circle, slapping their thighs with cries of "ha! ha! ha!" When a man made up his mind on the choice of a partner, he shouted out the name of a girl, who walked across in a matter-of-fact way, joined him, and they began dancing. This process went on till all were paired, and then as they warmed to their work, they broke out into a rough sort of recitative resembling some weird incantation. Between the dances, the sexes fell again into the original groups and sang, sometimes together, but more often in rivalry, entirely different airs. The

girls had not a notion of being afraid of us, and petted us as if we were attractive savages, begging Julian to ask us to come every year and to learn Hungarian first, that we might chatter together.

CHAPTER IX.

HOSPITABLE ROOFS.

OUR journeys in uncovered carts seemed fated to coincide with storms. We left Pusztafalu in the early morning when the corn-fields on the hillsides seemed all to have been combed downwards, and disconsolate herdsmen sat by the side of large tracts of sand and soil which now stretched in the place of grass, gazing hopelessly on the wilderness. Our way lay over Count F——'s estates, in whose château we hoped to dine. Julian, who was to be our guide as far as Schmek's, where friends awaited him, had already given him some hint of our intention, through the medium of a telephone connected with one of his shooting boxes, which stood close to Pusztafalu. This telephone was of his own constructing, and had aroused in us a lively curiosity to see so ingenious a Count. It rained pitilessly, and when at the end of five hours we arrived in the village hard by the château,,

we felt that we were hardly the sort of objects any one would care to welcome into a drawing-room, so we sent our cards up to the house by a messenger, that the Count might have the option of ignoring or welcoming two drowned rats, and waited in the village pastor's house, wringing out our clothes and drying them as best we could by the kitchen stove. After a short delay a secretary arrived from the château to show us the way, and the Count himself was standing on the verandah of a large low building to receive us. Immediately round the house lay a tangled, somewhat neglected-looking flower garden, but house and garden seemed to be planted down in the heart of a rich virgin Nature. From the moment of setting foot in the entrance hall it was obvious that the Count's interest lay far away from flower gardens. The hall, corridors and several rooms were literally papered with coloured English chromographs of celebrated hunters and racers, in which he evidently delighted; and he informed us that he was the possessor of an English stud groom—a Yorkshireman. Count F—— was a bachelor, and confirmed our earlier conclusions as to the superior cultivation of the bachelors of Hungary. He was a first-rate amateur artist, an uncommonly

skilful photographer, a musician of no mean order even for a Magyar, but above all a scientist. His particular sanctum was fitted up by his own hands with every modern contrivance in the way of telegraphs, telephones, electric bells, etc., that could add to the comfort or convenience of directing a large estate. Taking him all round, he was a capital specimen of a Hungarian magnate, exceedingly well equipped with natural talents, which he developed to the extreme limit of good amateurism without compromising his dignity by going further. He led us from room to room, showing the family portraits, the spoils of the chase, the trophies brought from foreign travels, and, best of all, collections of native embroideries and peasant crafts, until we began to think his tastes boundless. After dinner yet another accomplishment came to light. His valet having brought him a pipe some four feet long, and having handed coffee to the rest of the party, the Count entered into a deep geological conference with Julian, and somewhat astounded that gentleman by the extent of his knowledge. In Hungary a very practical interest attaches to the study of geology, for the mineral wealth of the country is still to a great extent unexplored, and landowners may enter-

tain reasonable hopes of finding treasure on their estates.

While this discussion was in progress, Miranda and I had time to remember how wet we were, and to long for an opportunity of changing our dripping garments. But our host was a shy man, and, unfortunately, no malady is so catching; so we sat on in silence, unable to bring ourselves to the point of framing a request, while the rain continued to drive pitilessly against the windows. At length the Count, knowing us to be anxious to reach a watering-place named Rank that night, offered us the use of his carriage and horses for the journey. Such kindness kindled our courage, and we asked for a room in which to change our clothes. Our baggage was fetched from the village, and we were led by a man-servant through suite after suite of unoccupied rooms which had an air of Renaissance elegance about them, and finally shut into one, though why the one selected was considered more appropriate than any we had passed through it would be hard to say. With a feeling of utter luxury and comfort we emerged from that room dry and tidy, and felt that it was promotion indeed, after the moist and jolting journey of the morning, to step

into a softly-cushioned victoria behind two magnificent horses. Just as we started, a very pathetic thing occurred. Sounds of panting and thudding, as of a heavy man running in desperate haste, came



from behind the carriage, and a voice called out in broad Yorkshire, "When do you return? Can I meet you at the station and talk with you on your way home?" We called out something incoherent, and

before we could get our heads round the hood we had been whisked round a corner, and the stud groom was out of sight. So one of the only two English voices that we heard during our three months in Hungary remains without a body or visible shape in our memories.

More rain, and the state of the roads caused us to abandon the idea of getting to Rank that night. It seemed hardly civil, to say the least of it, to run the risk of overworking the Count's horses; so coming to a village we decided, as was becoming our habit, to quarter ourselves upon the parson. He too proved to be a bachelor, advanced in years, and although he bore himself with a hospitable dignity, I fancy he was a trifle flustered at our appearance. We sat around a table waiting for supper while he talked to us, in German I think, of Napoleon's wars; but the day's drenching was beginning to tell on us, and although we knew that at ten o'clock one of the rooms would be converted into a bedroom and handed over to us, Miranda and I had a great longing to go to bed there and then, with a draught of something hot. You can hardly ask to go to bed when the dining-room may be your future place of rest, and, alas! there was no lady to divine our feel-

ings from our draggled looks. A red-faced house-keeper came in several times during her master's absence, stared, and even laughed at us a good deal, when we tried to explain our feelings by signs. She was the only woman we hated in Hungary. In the course of conversation the parson let fall the information that his groom had been to America. Here is our chance, thought I. I will catch the groom and tell him in my native tongue to ask the red-faced dame where we are to sleep, and to tell her that we feel ill, and would like to go to bed, if quite convenient. I sauntered into the yard, and coming up with the young man, fixed him with a serious eye, and slowly and clearly said a few phrases in words of one syllable. He nodded brightly, with every appearance of having grasped my meaning, and interpreted something to the old dame and a ring of grinning peasants. The dame shook her head, and fetched Julian to solve the situation. "What do you want rum for?" asked Julian, a trifle indignantly. Alas! the groom, whose knowledge of English consisted of three words, had caught "room" as a familiar sound, and leaped to a wild conclusion. So that boldly conceived scheme of mine failed utterly, and Miranda and I sat round

the supper table with splitting heads and aching limbs, and did our best to appear amiable and intelligent as the hours wore on. That was the only situation in our whole trip that we felt to approach the tragic. To throw yourself without warning on the hospitality of a stranger, and that stranger an elderly gentleman, to be too ignorant of the customs of the country to know if the request you longed to make would be looked upon as modest or monstrous, and to be unable to make yourself intelligible to the woman in the house, is, I assure you, a state of things that has its painful side. Ten o'clock came round at last, and showed that the dining-room was to be our portion for the night; so it would hardly have done, after all, to have proposed getting into bed before supper.

CHAPTER X.

A MOUNTAIN WATERING-PLACE.



SCHMEKS, or Tatra-Füred, was our northern-most goal. We early realized that no Hungarian patriot would forgive us, if we left the country without having visited its most beautiful and most celebrated watering-place, and one too that boasts an English head-waiter, and about every third summer harbours several English guests. Before we knew anything of Schmeks, or

where it was on the map, we had used the name as a sop to throw to enthusiastic Magyars who betrayed an anxiety to rearrange our programme. The effect

of the name was magical; it seemed to assure them at once that we knew what we were about. Nevertheless it was with sinking hearts that we neared the little station of Poprad, which lies on the northern limit of the plain at the feet of the Tatra range.

Artists are not always quite so happy amidst regulation fine scenery that all right-minded people admire, as they are in freakish places of their own choosing. But Tatra-Füred was surrounded by a majesty that could silence criticism. It is carved out of the deep pine forests that cover the lower slopes of one of the Tatra mountains, which rises sheer from the plain and sends its granite peaks some 9,000 feet into the sky. The absence of any lesser heights to act as buttresses to these mountains and let them down gently to the plain, adds to their impressiveness. Their isolation probably accounts also for the small amount of snow that lingers on their bare summits during the summer months, for the warm winds come to them from the plain, unchilled by any intermediate altitudes, and the crags themselves are so narrow and steep that the snow slips down as soon as fallen, only collecting in a few tight little crevices.

An excellent road cut through the forest ascends steadily from Poprad for some miles, and as we neared Schmek's the sun grew dimmer and the heat diminished, for it lies usually muffled in a cloud. It seemed a trifle flippant, in the midst of such wild beauty, to drive under a gingerbread-coloured arch, rippling with flags, and pull up before a circulating library and gimcrack shop. The whole colony is in the hands of a private company, and under a manager who directs and regulates all business matters, and a medical man who works it on hydropathic principles. To judge by the prices, the company must pocket enormous profits, for, even allowing for the distances from which provisions were brought, their excellence was in no way proportionate to their cost. The sleeping arrangements and commissariat of Tatra-Füred were in a state of transition, having lost the charm of simplicity and not acquired the comfort of luxury. There were a few visitors who meant to be rustic, and did not care what they wore, but they were far outnumbered by those who cared very much for their toilets without having learned to be quite happy in them. The settlement consisted of a coffee house and restaurant in the centre of the

clearing, surrounded by bathing establishments and houses containing bed-rooms, and a few small private villas all built of wood, chalet fashion, and bearing fanciful names, such as "Rigi," "Vadaskürt." Footpaths branched off into the dense pine woods in every direction, leading to small pavilions or summer-houses, or ending abruptly; but once off the beaten track it was no joke to find it again.

Life at a bath is essentially an idle one, except for the few, the very few people who explore the wild neighbourhood. At eight o'clock in the morning the gipsy music strikes up on the coffee house verandah, and the inhabitants turn out for a breakfast, over which there is no hurry betrayed. The ladies in demi-toilet, the men one and all in gay-coloured felt hats with feathers stuck at the back like little curly tails. The medical man had a habit of fluttering from table to table, dispensing and collecting compliments at every meal. Romantic tales of broken hearts and duels hung about him, which we found it hard to reconcile with his mature appearance.

The feature of the morning was the "krummel holz" bath, and that was something to linger in. Each bather had a little compartment fitted with a

large iron bath, in which to float. The water had an exquisite aroma of the pine wood that had been steeped in it, and about six inches of fragrant foam lay on the surface. I have no definite notion of what its effect is supposed to be, which is an instance of the unintelligent way I travel; but I know that after half an hour's soaking you feel six years younger, and as if nothing in the world could irritate you, though you are, I admit, stained brown in patches, and a trifle gummy. From twelve to two, dinner was served in the restaurant, and that we thought the worst feature in the day. The roar and din of voices made it as difficult to talk as in a London street, and the waiters, who rushed frantically from table to table, were so overworked they could hardly be said to be sane. The one word to which they listened was "*Fizetni kérem*" ("I wish to pay, please"). And then not one, but five or six arrived, all expecting kreutzers for the attendance they had not given. The music struck up again at intervals during the afternoon, and at about four o'clock the fashionable promenade took place, which was as depressing as such things usually are. The unique charm about that Tatra-Füred scenery, the one that set it apart, was the vast, silent, luminous plain that

stretched below, and was visible through the pines at all sorts of unexpected moments. There was something awful in it, and I always found myself



EATING KÜKÜRUT.

struck dumb by a glimpse of it in the middle of any conversation. Imagine the flatness and vastness of the sea, without its motion, without a murmur,

though you knew the silence was the sum of infinite small noises.

The colony occasionally broke out into a ball, and usually on a Sunday night. We were lucky enough to see one that had a special feature about it. Shortly before our arrival there had been a quarrel in the place between a Jew and a Hungarian, which had stirred up all the smouldering hatred between the races. The Jew had thought fit to disappear with his family, it was said to avoid a duel, and he was consequently referred to as a coward. The result of this was, that although the Hebrew maidens attended the ball they sat as wallflowers all the evening, declining to dance and run the risk of having their hands refused in the Lancers by the Hungarian ladies, an insult which appears to have been offered them on previous occasions. We noticed a certain civilized edition of the etiquette in vogue in peasant dances to be the order of the day in this ball-room, for the gentlemen collected in a group and occupied a large space in the centre of the room. When the fancy moved a man, he dashed out for a partner, circled with her about twice round the group, and then restored her to her chaperone. The after-supper *csárdás* was the most striking feature

of the evening. This dance, to my mind, has suffered from its transplantation from peasant simplicity to the ball-room, where it first made its appearance some fifty years ago. It loses all picturesqueness, and some of the abrupt, untamed movements seem singularly out of keeping with evening dress.

As the evening advanced, the dance became somewhat rompy and reckless, and I am told it often continues in this fashion for hours without a pause, which must be a positive athletic feat. We only watched about an hour of its undiminished ardour, for our chaperone, a little Russian princess, was having her first glimpse of the csárdás, and took a somewhat rigorous view of its propriety. She judged it more leniently next morning, and laughed away her indignation; but we agreed that such dances, when danced with southern fervour, must remain a riddle to northerners like ourselves. This little princess, whose rooms were near to our own, was a remarkable personality, and we sought out her society daily. She looked about thirty years of age, was a widow and a grandmother, and beneath a lively manner and a brilliant culture concealed a practical philosophy and a good deal of sincere re-

ligion. Miranda and she early discovered a mutual bond, a passion for the Tziganes, a passion which the Tziganes soon divined and acknowledged with musical response. The cymbal player haunted the princess's rooms, arriving with his huge instrument and begging to be allowed to play to her, on one condition and one only, that she should not offer him money as a reward. His anxiety on this point was so real that tears filled his eyes. He knew himself he could play much better if there were no business transaction. So on every wet day—and that was nearly every day, for the clouds held Tatra-Füred in affectionate embrace—the “cymbal” was installed in the princess's balcony, a bottle of red wine at his elbow, and we disposed ourselves around, and the hours slipped by to the sound of his wild, fitful music, while our eyes wandered over the dark pine tops, through the drizzling rain, away to the vast plain where the sun shone perpetually.

Everything in Hungary goes to a leisurely time, but the postal arrangements of Schmek's were peculiarly exasperating to a British mind. Letters entered the colony pretty punctually, and three o'clock was the advertised time for their readiness for the public, but their sorting was a matter of caprice. You

might go down to the little office at 3.30, eager for a letter, and have the pleasure of seeing the postmaster seated behind a pane of glass, toying idly with an envelope addressed to yourself, smiling at the writing, then laying it aside and hanging over another in deliberate enjoyment. He was quite unruffled by thumps on the glass, and people didn't seem to take his pastime ill, but strolled away and looked in again an hour later on the chance of his having quite done with their letters.

The Lomnitz Spitz, although only the second highest peak of the Karpathians, has a most formidable appearance when viewed from below, being narrow, craggy, utterly devoid of vegetation, and streaked with snow. Once on the top, it is said that Galicia on the one hand and Hungary on the other lie spread at your feet like a map. This prospect seemed so worth an effort that, although I had never climbed before, I decided to have a try to reach the summit. No other visitors being of the same way of thinking, Julian, one guide, and myself formed the entire party. The directors of Schmek's tried to force three guides upon us, which pointed to a slack season in mountaineering, for the occasion could hardly be said to demand such support. I look

upon that ascent as one of the greenest acts of my life.

We started at five in the morning in a dense fog and rain. The guide said it would lift and be splendid later, and I believed him. I placed a child-like trust in all he said. I took a second pair of shoes, because he said I should cut one pair to pieces, and some brandy, which he said we should all need. He looked grimly at my costume, which I had thought so practical, and said something about the danger of petticoats, but I could not meet his views on this point, and we set out. The whole while we were climbing with hands and feet, up steep and often loose rocks, soaked to the skin. Extempore streams and watercourses splashed over our backs. A chamois ran across our path at a few feet distance, and the guide promised a herd, which like his other promises remained unfulfilled. After about four hours' steady climb we sat down by a snowdrift, rubbed our numbed limbs, and drank some brandy. The wall of fog broke now and again, showing glimpses of sharp needle-like crags around us, and a sheer abyss below. I am pretty sure that without that fog to muffle up the possibilities beneath, I should never have reached the top. As it

was I did, and we squatted dejectedly on some sharp rocks, frozen to the bone, resentfully staring into the white curtain around, that was all we had in exchange for the sunny panoramas of Poland and Hungary. We added our visiting cards to the mouldy little collection deposited by a handful of climbers in a tin box under a stone, and then prepared for the downward journey. Ten hours after we started we were back in Tatra-Füred, having performed the sort of climb one might do any day in a nightmare. After thawing for a sleepy half-hour in a pine-wood bath I felt ready to start again and try for better luck, and my feelings towards the guide were not wholly pleasant when next morning broke clear and brilliant, and our friends jeered at our folly in starting in a fog.

Seven days we lingered in Tatra-Füred, and never fully realized the grandeur of our surroundings till the train steamed with us southward from Poprad. Then we looked back, and found it hard to believe that a colony of smart, idle people were drinking mineral waters, reading novels, and lounging away the day in the midst of the scene that we were leaving. Sheer from the plain rose a bank of clouds, in form as solid as a mass of rocky strata, in colour

as delicate as an opal. Its upper edge was torn, rifted, streaked, and stretched across the forest-covered mountain-side; and milky-purple granite crags towered up beyond into a rose-red sky. Among their needle summits strayed little solitary clouds, like wandering flecks of fire.



AT TATRA-FÜRED.

CHAPTER XI.

OVER THE GREAT PLAIN.

ON August the 1st we dropped down into the heart of the plain, into hot, dusty Debreczen, a sort of glorified village, called by the Magyars "the peasant capital." Debreczen has little shade and no water to offer the traveller, and the sun blazes down with enthusiasm on the wide streets and low, irregular houses; but what it has to offer, and that in lavish quantities, is dust, which lies a good six inches deep in all the streets. It was Sunday, and the "Rome of Calvinism" had a depressed look about her streets that was almost English. There had been a market, but it had effaced itself as quickly as possible, and an air of stagnation prevailed. We were now about to start on the programme that Count Esterházy had planned for us, and the first item down, "a visit to the Hortobágy (the part of the plain lying round Debreczen) in the town carriage and five horses" was distinctly

attractive. Five o'clock in the evening was fixed for the start, and before that we dutifully visited the college and the great church, which were the scenes of Kossuth meetings and of the declaration of independence of 1848, regretting our ignorance of history as we daily had occasion to do. To tell the truth, as the time drew near we began to be a little nervous about the coachman who was to drive us; he had such a reputation for independence and outspokenness. It is said of him, or his predecessor—for perhaps the post of town coachman begets independence—that, when the king ventured a wish to drive faster, he replied, "I have driven a greater man than you," referring, of course, to Louis Kossuth. From Louis Kossuth to ourselves, what a ghastly descent!

When the portier announced the carriage, we felt there must be no delay, and hurried down to see the five horses pawing the ground to be off, their tails almost sweeping the dust, and the coachman in blue and black uniform, stolidly erect. A crowd was quickly gathering in the formerly deserted street, and there was a flutter of curiosity in the air as to who was to prove worthy to ride at this hour and in this fashion. A few moments of

incognito were left us, for a Hungarian gentleman was to escort us, who had not yet appeared—a citizen, whose sense of duty and hospitality brought him with us in spite of overwhelming business. We spent those moments in securing coffee at the little restaurant tables within a few yards of the carriage—a “visit to the plain” sounded so supperless. As we swallowed the scalding stuff I quite pitied the bewilderment of the crowd when they should see two English girls get into the carriage.

On the stroke of five we dashed off in a cloud of dust, leaving the crowd of gaping faces to the willing oratory of the hotel portier. The coming eloquence was already working in his face, and he was only waiting to see the last of us to make a speech.

We left the town behind and took to the road, which stretched straight as a dart in front, and thoughts of the old semi-nomadic life we were going to see came crowding up—a life that is to-day very much what it was in the time of the old patriarchs. From the time the Magyar took possession of the land the shepherds have gone on their way unheeding—when they were not being killed by Tartar or Turk—and have tended their flocks, and minded their own particular business, with the calm be-

gotten of great space. It was the evening of the first of August, and on the second, the first railway was to cut across the Hortobagy—an historic day, in fact; and for once we were not too late, and had stolen a march on civilization.

To right and left stretched great tracts of maize and flax and corn, flat as a billiard table, right away to the horizon. We began to have some faint idea now of what dust is, and to realize that we had been fastidious in Debreczen. The busy citizen drew on a long holland overcoat, and the action plainly said, "The worst is yet to come." One wonders at first why the road is so broad, until one looks to right and left, and wonders it is not broader. Such a sense of space around might easily make men reckless in planning roads. Besides, they had not been made for a handful of travellers, or even five-horsed carriages, such as ours, but for herds and droves of cattle. Before the momentous year of 1848, when Debreczen was still a great commercial centre, caravans of merchants from Vienna crawled across the plain. It took ninety days to do the journey, and they came with some fifty men and thirty carriages then, in the days when brigands were not mythical. The old records of the

town bear witness to the strokes of business done and the large sums taken in the days of departed glory. Now the railways whirl Viennese merchants to the places where they would be, and Debreczen is not among them. Advancing columns of white dust along the road disclose on nearer approach peasant carts rattling along with four or six capital horses. Nearly every peasant of importance drives his four-in-hand, partly owing to the great distances to be traversed, partly, perhaps, to an innate love of style. The peasant of these parts focuses the practical possibilities of the Magyar, is rich and of extreme independence. In consequence, the Jews, so cordially detested throughout Hungary, where they fatten on the commercial inaptitude of the people, have gained no footing in Debreczen. There was nothing but time to measure the distance as we drove along that endless straight road. The soil seemed to yield easily and abundantly, though for ninety years it has not lain fallow. In spite of the natural plenty, which might tempt to idleness, the peasant could give us a lesson in industry. What do you say to a day beginning at three o'clock and stretching till nine in the evening, with only short breaks for food? His powers of work really become

prodigious when there is threatening weather and crops must be gathered against time. He works then the entire night through, by starlight or moonlight, for days or weeks together, only stretching himself out, in exchange, for a couple of hours' sleep in the heat of the day. In spite of all this work, finer specimens could hardly be found than these peasants. They bear no traces of stupidity or deformity from toil, but are tall, straight and active, with the clearest of brown skins, kept healthy by the heat.

When we had gone a third of our way, the sun had set and burnished the tips of the maize stretches, and painted a yellow halo round each haystack, and shed a beautifying glow over that uniform world of vegetation. It was growing dusk as we came upon the welcome sight of a low whitewashed inn—the *Látákép Csárda*, or inn of the *Fata Morgana*—lying in the border line between the cultivated and pasture land. Some shepherds squatted on the grass near, their knees drawn up to their chins, circling round a leaping fire of straw. Just for companionship's sake they had lit it, for the night was still warm. One of the gallows-like wells, to be seen all over Hungary, was opposite the inn—

the bucket dangling suspiciously like a corpse in the coming dusk. Our arrival called a flock of brown-limbed, dark-eyed children into the white-washed colonnade that ran the length of the house. We were extremely thirsty, and had a large deposit of dust in our mouths. You need never be thirsty long in the land of a thousand springs and the best of wine. The woman of the house brought us out a tray with bottles of delicious white wine, and the coldest of water, and would accept no payment. The coachman unbent to drink as well, but was engaged primarily in flicking up his horses, that they might curve their necks and show off their points to the foreigners, who might possibly sketch them. He filled a pipe with a metal lid and long curved stem, and proceeded to smoke. That he was as other men are, and had his foibles I shall prove to you later, when we succeeded in adding a touch of pride to the amount already deposited in his face.

“Gee, woh! my five horses!” we instinctively exclaimed, remembering Hans of the fairy tale, who borrowed his neighbours’ horses and swaggered before the village. It did feel very fine to see the ragged edges of those five tails in front. Now we were in the Hortobagy proper, and had done with

roads. The pasture land began, and stretched, and stretched, it seemed for ever, till clearly and distinctly still it met the line of sky. Certain darker blots, strewn about at irregular distances, showed where herds of cattle or flocks of sheep were grazing; and at rarer intervals far, tiny whitewashed huts, where a little colony of shepherds had their headquarters. As the dusk deepened and the stars brightened, fires leaped up and died down, wherever a shepherd felt dull, looking like a larger and solider sort of earth stars, and in the far horizon almost confusing themselves with the real stars. The expression, "the vault of heaven," seemed for the first time to have a full meaning. No night at sea can give the impression of such utter silence, for here the ocean of land was as still and as motionless as the sky above. The whole scene began to take a weird look, as mists began to rise, and now and again, as we skirted a flock of sheep, dogs leapt fiercely after us, and pursued us barking, giving us a mild hint of what it might be to have wolves on our track. The citizen began to talk of fogs and storms on the plain. It seems no fog at sea can be more paralysing than here. There is nothing for it, he said, but to sit down and wait; and he had lively

recollections of thirty-six hours spent close to the town, with carriages searching everywhere for him, and finding everything except him. When a storm of wind comes roaring over the flatness, there is nothing to be done but to meet it face downwards on the ground.

Then as it grew darker the citizen mounted the box to help in deciding the way. The soda deposits on the surface, which give a bleached look in daylight, shone weirdly white in the starlight. The wind, freshening up, blew in our faces, and we began to grow hungry. Just then the carriage stopped, the men got down from the box, and we were told the way was lost. This did not somehow seem an agitating announcement, for there seemed no way to lose—a great tract without roads, and no obvious reason why one part was not as good as another. But, as a matter of fact, there are pools of water, marshy places, and streams, and we had, after all, a destination—a farm-house belonging to the town. The citizen walked on in front, peering about on the ground with a lantern, and the coachman led the front horses at a foot pace. We stood upright in the carriage and enjoyed the novelty, the uniqueness of the situation: to be lost on an ocean

of land, with a possibility of passing the night under the stars. I began to nurse a secret hope that the way might continue lost, and we should sleep under that great luminous vault, on the silvery, misty, infinite land. After about a quarter of an hour the way was pronounced found, and we quickened our pace and went on into space, until we came to a river and a broad stone bridge, and two minutes after upon the town farm, stretching its whitewashed length out in the darkness; the inevitable mock gallows streaking the sky opposite. There was complete silence, and no light visible, and it was some time before our loud raps were answered, and then only by a timid challenge from within. Brigands were still looked on as a faint possibility, it seemed. The well-known and authoritative tones of the town officer soon gained us an entrance, and we turned into a long whitewashed corridor, that led to a low room with a brick floor. Several heads wrapped in coloured handkerchiefs were peering through two inner doorways, and were shortly followed by their corresponding bodies in hastily devised costumes; and then lights were lit, and a long parley held as to what we could eat, and finally, in a wonderfully short time, considering

the fire was still to make, they brought us a giant omelette, wine, milk, and apples. A messenger was sent to another part of the little settlement for the overseer, or sort of shepherds' magistrate and head physician to the large animal population, in one.



HE MASSIVELY SMOKED A LONG PIPE.

Promptly and courteously he came and supped with us, and placed himself at our service for visiting the shepherds next morning. The master of the farm, who did some business too in the inn way, was a thick-set individual. He massively smoked a long

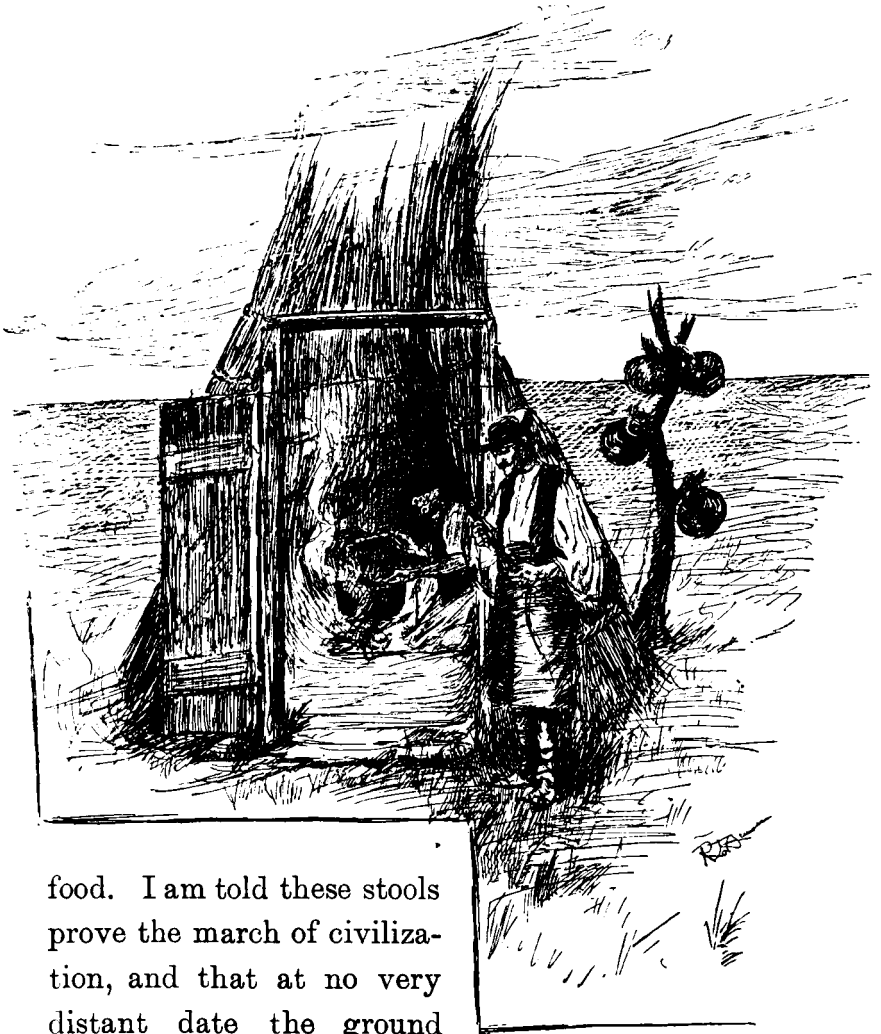
pipe, taking a step nearer at slow intervals and contemplating us. At length he threw in the information that a Frenchman had visited them some weeks ago, and enjoyed himself so passing well that he stayed six days. Then he relapsed into silence and smoke. The clock pointed to eleven, and Miranda and I withdrew under the guidance of a gaily-dressed damsel, on the understanding that, if the morning were clear, three o'clock should see us up and gazing at the sunrise, but if dull, we would take an hour's grace, and begin the day at four.

I awoke in the pale dawn, and in the confusion of ideas tried to remember where I was. I felt only certain of one thing, that I was by the sea, so familiar was the rush of the wind, the dull distant roar as of surf on the shingle. But sounds in the passage reminded me the wind came from the plain, and not from the sea, and something in its tone called up visions of long winter snow-bound days and nights in that lonely settlement. Once up and out in the strong wind a feeling of great excitement took possession of us. The sky was bright at the horizon, and streaked with purplish clouds overhead. The stone bridge was now seen to span quite an important river, and the silver grey of the great plain was

changed to a soft green. In varying perspective groups of three wells together were scattered, bearing a strong resemblance to the rude calvaries of Catholic countries. Two springless carts, ready harnessed, were waiting for us, and we started off, seated on straw, at a jolly pace across the green, destined for some shepherd settlement in the distance, which I must call a "club" for want of a better word. We came up first to a great herd of white oxen, some six hundred in number, lying densely packed together, a creamy mass, bristling with their long curved horns. Two peculiar woolly pyramid-shaped creatures, with long shaggy coats, which shook ridiculously, ran towards us. On nearer approach they were seen to wear hats, and they proved to be shepherds in sheepskins. These great sheepskin coats or bundas are, in fact, both summer and winter *house* for the wearers, who have no other shelter, but spend their nights in them for weeks together, hot or cold, in the open, by the side of their flocks. In winter they wear the wool inside, and display the white leather surface, edged with black wool; and in summer, turning the rough side out, convert themselves into monsters. They changed the sides in a minute at our request, and

stood to be sketched, leaning on their staffs. Their skins were so clear and brown, their eyes so bright, and their whole appearance so firm and sound and free from blemishes, it seemed almost as if they must be made of some other material than flesh and blood. Their lips parted over the soundest and whitest of teeth. The large black felt hats they wore strengthened their association in one's mind with early Biblical characters—so familiar is one with the coiffure given to Noah and his family in the toys of one's youth. They smilingly showed us the pockets in the skirts of their coats, which serve as larders, and where the provisions of days and weeks are stored, in the shape of bacon and bread and wine. When the weather is very wet, and the ground soaked through, they sleep sitting on a little stool. We made haste now to the "club," in order to see the cook at work preparing the breakfast. A whitewashed one-roomed hut, thatched with straw, served as wardrobe for the coats not in use, and as a general storehouse for extras. In summer, at least, they have a choice of costumes, and can alternate between the thick cream-coloured blanket-like coats, embroidered in a bold decorative way with colours, and the summer

side of the sheepskin, which is said to be an excellent protection against the heat. Opposite the door of the hut was a tent-shaped erection, open at the top, and made of broad reed matting, stretched round stakes. This fragile-looking shelter is the kitchen, and experience proves it to be the strongest structure to resist the wind which whistles through the perforated walls, and hardly more than bends them. Over a bright fire in the centre, and suspended from a stout curved branch, swung the breakfast in an enamelled iron pot. The cook, in a blue linen garment, was squatting by its side on the spotless earth floor, stirring vigorously the *kása*, a kind of meal, and lumps of bacon. He stirred and stirred, and then began to toss it like a pancake till it resembled a gigantic irreproachable omelette; and yet he was not satisfied, but seemed to detect always some flaw on the surface. At last a subtle difference seemed to satisfy him, and he unhooked the pot and carried it into the open. An oblong four-legged wooden stool with a circular hole in the surface was the breakfast table, and he firmly fitted the pot into this hole, and planted five little three-legged stools around. Now all was ready, and the breezes of heaven blew lustily over the smoking



food. I am told these stools prove the march of civilization, and that at no very distant date the ground sufficed. The shepherds had hurried up and changed their sheepskins, which they folded and

strapped neatly and hung against the walls of the hut, for the flannel coats. There was some delay about beginning, for one of the party was late, and good manners prompted them to wait. At length, five in number, they fell to with spoons on the smoking substance. We tasted it too, and found that it was beyond criticism; not so they, for they had all been cooks in their day, which is the bottom rung of their social ladder, and they pronounced it too salt. Their back views presented quite a priestly appearance, for the cut of the coat resembled some high festival vestment. Very few minutes sufficed to dispose of the simple meal, and they began thinking of business again, solaced by a pipe. Quite close to the kitchen was an original construction somewhat resembling a hat-stand, made of a trunk of a young tree, with the branches trimmed and cut close to form pegs, and on these pegs were stuck the green and brown glazed earthenware pots used in cooking. A neat square stack of dried manure was the only other noticeable feature against one side of the hut. This is their fuel, and seems to serve the purpose well, so that life in the Hortobagy cannot be very expensive. Their wives—for it seems that they have them—stay in

Debreczen, and pay rare and occasional visits to the "clubs." Seven or eight shepherds, at most, join together for the convenience of a cook and a hut. But do not imagine there is perfect equality in that primitive world. There are many niceties of social distinction—let socialists make what they can of this. Foremost in rank come the csikos, or horse-herds; then the gulyás, or ox-herds; then the juhász or shepherds, and, lowest of all, the kondás, or swine-herds. Rank is not hereditary, however, and most begin as cooks, and work their way upwards. In spite of their splendid limbs and general air of strength, they looked a kindly-natured, even gentle, race; but the overseer, as he drove us away, shook his head and smiled an odd smile, as he told what wild fellows they could be now and again, when drink was in them. He recollected cases, too, of lynch law, when they quietly took and hanged some troublesome fellow given to brigandage.

We scudded away—the wind seemed like wine for the horses—and pulled up at the heart of the little colony, where giant haystacks were built up inside a fence. They seemed like provisions in some fairy tale, and the impression was only heightened when the overseer began calculating that hay enough was

stored there for twenty regiments for sixty years. One's imagination refuses to work out such portions. Here, too, was an enclosed paddock for convalescent horses, who were picking up health again for freedom in the plain. We drove now to a herd of horses with a fresh, free look about them. Several csikos, mounted, and with long whips, were scouring about, their cloaks flying out behind, their white linen garments flapping, and pipes in their mouths—looking as at home in the saddle as Arabs. The town officer sent one running off on foot to some distant herd, to drive them up for our benefit. The fellow soon caught and mounted a horse, and came scouring towards us with the whole herd, the swallows flying low about their legs. What a scene for an animal painter, and what characters those horses seemed to have, untroubled as yet by harness or the saddle!

When we returned to the farm for breakfast, the young woman who had acted as our maid over night was resplendent in scarlet and white, and wore a long pigtail under her coloured red handkerchief. She seemed in an ultra-friendly frame of mind. She followed us back to our room, shut and bolted the door with dramatic gesture, skipped into

the middle of the floor, stroked our clothes, and took extreme interest in our hair; and then, balancing herself on the end of the dressing-table and swinging her foot, she drew a half-smoked cigarette from her pocket, placed it between her teeth, stuck her hands on her hips, threw back her head and laughed saucily. Was it the Frenchman? It seemed difficult to reconcile this ambitious young person with that dreary farm in the winter months.

It was still early when we started to return, but the sun was beginning to make itself felt, and the plain was beginning to wear a much thirstier look. We had not gone far, when suddenly ahead stretched a great irregular lake, in which groups of trees and woods were reflected, and to the left a large cathedral stood on a little island. We stared in astonishment—there, behind, was the farm and settlement we had left, rising like a small Venice from still, calm water. Then the lake began to shift its quarter, to dry up in parts and spread again in others. “It is very clear to-day,” said the busy gentleman, turning round, “one of the best examples of the *fata morgana* I have seen.” So this was the *fata morgana*, and a most luxurious phenomenon it is. No matter that one knows the scientific explanation—

that the trees will prove to be a herd of sheep or pigs, the cathedral a tiny village church miles and miles away—it is most cheering, and as good as a draught of water to a thirsty man, to drive across a dry plain to the accompaniment of lakes and marshes, which change and recompose themselves constantly. We eagerly followed the phases of that mirage, till it died away, and we passed the flocks of sheep that had played an important part in the picture as trees and forests. The sun was now blazing fiercely down. It was when we halted half-way on the return journey and ventured to sketch the coachman, that we discovered him to be merely human, for he then told us he had a far more gorgeous uniform at home, and he wished he had put it on. At length we arrived at the dusty road again. Through the doubtful land, not quite sure if it would finally be pasture or agricultural, birds flocked, and the distance was fairly punctuated by storks, standing in one-legged solemnity in streaks of water. As we grew hotter and hotter we composed ourselves to silence and endurance, and gazed at the water melons growing among the maize, and wished for another *fata morgana*. Speaking was an imprudence, for a sudden influx of dust formed a

rich mud in our mouths, our noses were already useless for breathing purposes, and our hair felt like barristers' wigs.



COACHMAN ON THE HORTOBAGY.

The latter part of the journey was a little overshadowed with the thought that we must "tip" that magnificent coachman. If he had not shown a weak point, I think my courage would have failed.

Everything goes by contrasts, and Debreczen and the hotel seemed cool, and the first sensation of plunging one's head into a very small basin of cold water never to be forgotten.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TZIGANES.



IN the life both of town and country the Tziganes (gipsy) plays an important part. It is more than four centuries since these artist tribes, of undoubted Indian origin, crossed the frontier and entered the country from Roumania and the lands lying

east of the mountains, and ever since then they have been wandering about the land as incorrigible nomads. At the time of their arrival their costumes, when they wore any, were a combination of the

dresses of the people among whom they had dwelt, and their speech, a jumble of Roumanian, Wallack, Saxon, with a strong sprinkling of Indian words. In matters of civilization they have remained absolutely stationary, the only alteration being in their dress, which now consists of cast-off Magyar clothes and rags. There are, however, degrees among them, the lowest type, called "Kortorar," live in mud huts, holes in the ground, or hollows in the rocks on the outskirts of the villages, and supplement a livelihood of theft by tinkering and primitive odds and ends of industry. This type of gipsy is a half-naked picturesque rogue, and hardly a blessing to the village he selects as his temporary residence. The rest, called "Gletecore," are of purer race, and are never stationary. They wander continually over the wilds, pitching rude tents and canopies, or sleeping under the stars, and living on what they can steal or obtain by begging. In order to obviate the demoralising effect of having gipsy visitors for too long in a village, laws have been framed compelling them to move forward every two or three days, which any magistrate who has the morale of his district at heart is energetic in enforcing; for long experience has taught the Magyar that a lengthy

sojourn never develops instincts for civilization in the gipsy. The birth of a child is looked upon as a fine opportunity for acquiring presents, and a cunning father will carry the baby to perhaps twenty magistrates in succession, inducing them all to stand godfather and play the benefactor. Very noisy scenes sometimes occur when members of a tribe have been detained in some village prison for a flagrant breach of the law.

One day at Margita, Miranda happened to be walking with the magistrate's wife down the village street, when the most extraordinary and monotonous sounds of wailing and howling arose from the prison yard. Turning their steps in that direction, they came upon a row of women and children squatting against the wall that divided them from their lords and masters within the prison, swaying backwards and forwards and uttering regular and mechanical cries of grief. The appearance of the magistrate's wife was a grand opportunity, and they redoubled their wails, until some attraction too strong to resist began to cast a spell over them. At Miranda's waist glittered a metal buckle. In a few moments that luminous object had silenced them. One woman came up and touched it with a skinny finger, put-

ting some question in her dialect. "Only made in Birmingham," said Miranda in English, in the airy way she had of employing her native tongue on all occasions. The woman however seemed satisfied, and rejoining the rest they continued their dry-eyed



"ONLY MADE IN BIRMINGHAM."

lamentation, which, needless to say, failed to soften the rigour of the law.

The Tziganes have the dusky skins and the long, lithe limbs of the Indian, but they are too often



terribly thin and emaciated. Very great beauty is to be found among both men and women, and such a thing as a plain gipsy child I never saw. It would be hard to imagine anything more utterly fascinating than these small imps of darkness, with their black curls, roguish eyes, and indifference to clothing. An old hat or a necklace sufficiently represents civilization to many. The gipsy eyes have something quite special about them—a thrill and flicker of fire somewhere in their depths that has the power of making all other dark eyes seem tame and insipid, mere patches of colour. A Hungarian youth once said to me as he distractedly struck his forehead—and I sympathised with his emotion—“The eyes of the gipsy women! ah!! they drive you mad.”

How are we to explain the way in which these dirty, thriftless vagabonds, these poetic, emotional children of Nature, have gained such a hold on the affections of the Magyar. For a hold they undoubtedly have, though perhaps their place is somewhat that of the favourite dog, whose faults must be smiled at since he knows no better. The answer is to be found in music. It is through music the Tzigane has crept into the Hungarian heart,

through music that he has rendered a real service to the country. Whether the Hungarian gipsy has a special musical gift above his brothers in other lands, or whether, as I have heard it stated, in whatever country the gipsy finds himself his artistic nature responds to the peculiar tastes of its people, would be an interesting subject for inquiry. Be that as it may, the Hungarian has found in the Tzigane the perfect interpreter of his wild, passionate music. The violin in the hands of the Tzigane is no longer a musical instrument; it is a living, sensitive, palpitating creature. He has made it one with himself. Playing without notes, absolutely independent of any musical tradition, moving about the whole while with the gestures his feeling prompts, he triumphs over material, and pours straight from his inmost being a torrent of sound, that now wails in slow agony, now riots in a frenzy of joy, now pants in weariness, and is always intense, never for an instant monotonous or even restful. On their arrival in the country the gipsies found fragments of songs and of dances scattered throughout the length and breadth of the land, fragments that had been thrown out almost unconsciously in moments of intense feeling by an instinc-

tively musical peasantry. These fragments they gathered up, and roving from village to village found constant additions and variations to the original idea, till in time the csárdás was developed and a vast number of love songs were stored in their memories. In very rare instances only have the gipsies been composers, but they have been the preservers of the national music which has come down the centuries entirely by tradition, constantly receiving fresh impulse from each new artist. The words of these songs are of the simplest, and tell usually in the symbolic language of birds, insects and flowers, of some broken heart or some lost love. Sadness is the predominating idea in the love story. It seems true of these people too, in spite of their capacity for joy, that it is misery that has unlocked the poetry within them.

“ Our sweetest songs are those
That tell of saddest thought.”

The authorship of even the most famous airs is thus always obscure, and probably a very complex one.

The bands of musicians, who make a profession of their art and live in towns, very nearly attain to a civilised state. But, in spite of dress suits, of comfortable lodgings, and of a recognised position,

the gipsy blood comes out. All the money they make slips through their fingers; they have no capacity for practical life, only an infinite capacity for emotion and romance. And strange fortunes befall the more distinguished among them. Many tales are told of princesses and noble ladies who have fallen victims to their eyes and their violins, and on the strength of an intoxicating musical courtship have married them, to discover, perhaps, that music is not the best foundation for daily life. While the Tzigane plays, the Magyar is wax in his hands, and will empty his pockets for his benefit. The dependence is in a measure mutual, for the Tzigane must feel a response, must see the sympathy in the eyes of his listeners, before he can give full expression to his music. That is why it must remain for ever impossible to hear Hungarian music to advantage out of Hungary. The bands which visit foreign capitals—supposing, which is rarely the case, they were entirely composed of gipsies—would be powerless in an atmosphere of indifference or curiosity to do themselves justice. If they play their national music, which they are a little sensitive about producing to foreigners, they feel no response, no sympathy, and worse still, no compre-

hension, and their performance is paralysed. It is only among Hungarians that the gipsies can attain to their wonderful height of musical inspiration. Buda-Pest numbers these troops by dozens. Each hotel of importance has a band playing in its courtyard during the evening—usually a different one every night. They look keenly round to divine the tastes of the various guests, and the leader often wanders among the dining tables to ascertain the favourite songs. They were always a little puzzled when they caught sight of us, and tried a succession of national hymns, till they judged by our faces they had guessed rightly. During the summer they disperse to the various watering-places, and no place is too humble to keep its band. Even villages have a few stray fiddlers with rough and ready instruments, which they somehow force to serve their purpose. Nothing could be better calculated to inspire patriotism, or to fan the merest spark of courage into a flame, than the Rákoczi March played by a full band; but it is in the simple love songs that to my mind the Hungarian stands supreme. Here are two of them:—

Lento.

ÉNEK.

* Cse-re - bo - gár sar - ga cse - re - bo - gár

The first system of the musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 4/8. The lyrics are "* Cse-re - bo - gár sar - ga cse - re - bo - gár". The piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It includes dynamic markings of *p* (piano) and *f* (forte), along with accents (^) and a crescendo hairpin.

ZONGORA.

Nem Kér - dem én tö - led mi Kor lesz nyár

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "Nem Kér - dem én tö - led mi Kor lesz nyár". The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings of *p* and *f*, along with accents (^) and a crescendo hairpin.

Ast sem Kér-dem so - Ká - ig é - lek e?

The third system of the musical score continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "Ast sem Kér-dem so - Ká - ig é - lek e?". The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings of *ff* (fortissimo) and accents (^), along with a crescendo hairpin.

Csak azt mond meg ró - zám - é le - szek - e?

p

V V V V

* "Cs" is pronounced like the English "ch," and "s" like "sh."

Allegretto.

ÉNEK.

p Nézz rozsám a szemembe Mit ol-va-sol be-lő-le

ZONGORA.

p

>

piu sostenu - - - - - to piu accele - - - - - rando

Ugy e azt mondja Ugy e azt mondja

cres

vivace. f

Te vagyaz an-gyal-om ragyo-go csil-la-gom.

f

Of these songs, the first, "Cserebogár sarga Cserebogár" ("Cockchafer, yellow Cockchafer)," like so many of the Magyar *volkslied*, in which birds, insects and small animals are consulted as to the affairs of the heart, contains an appeal to a cock-

chafer, which runs somewhat as follows: "Cockchafer, yellow cockchafer, I do not ask when summer shall come, nor how long my life shall last; I only ask when I shall be my love's" (not, observe, when my love shall be mine). This song is said to be one of many that sprang from the heart of Czinka Panna, a gipsy girl, who lived in the last century, and conceived a romantic love for the patriot leader Rákoczi, whose camp she followed, and for whom and to whom she sang.

The other, of older and quite indefinite origin, contains the simple request from a lover to his mistress, that she will look into his eyes and read in their depths that she is, for him, the shining star among the angels.

CHAPTER XIII.

BÁNFFY-HUNYAD.

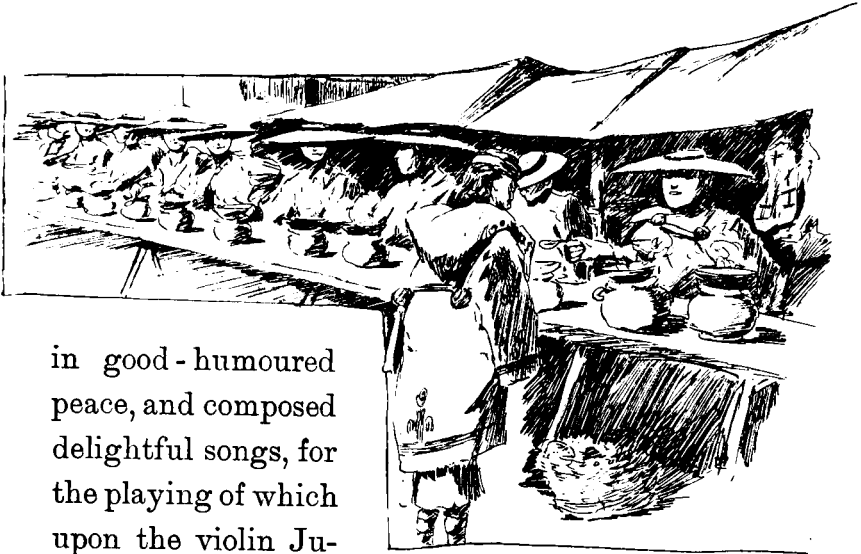
BÁNFFY-HUNYAD enjoys the very pick of situations among the hills and valleys of Western Transylvania. It was quite dark when we arrived at the little station, and found a silent burgomeister awaiting us on the platform. Miranda and I were handed into a carriage by this gentleman, who wasted no words on explanation. The coachman whipped up his horses, and we dashed off into the night. White cottages flashed past us as we drove up hill and down dale. To right and left the outlines of distant indigo mountains were traced against a paler sky, but the rest of the landscape remained mysterious, for clouds were over the stars. We pulled up in the courtyard of an inn, and were joined by Julian, who was still acting as our escort, and the burgomeister. They stayed to see that we were properly housed, and to convey apologies from the magistrate's wife at being

unable to receive us in her house, and a request that we would dine with her next day.

After a supper of buffalo milk and brown bread, Miranda and I went to sleep in a room containing eight remarkable armchairs, and got no hint from our dreams of the artistic treat in store for us on the morrow. A hum of voices from beneath the windows aroused us at five o'clock next morning, and finding our way out on to a balcony, we hardly restrained a scream of delight, for markets were our hobby, and here beneath were the beginnings of a glorified specimen. Beyond the tent-shaped wooden cottage roofs lay a circle of blue mountains, and up and down the streets, which all pointed hill-wards, spread a crowd of tumultuous interest. Carts covered with green and orange tarpaulins rested on their shafts in rows, and threw long blue shadows over the masses of fruit and water melons resting in the pale dust. Poles and spiky frameworks of the stalls, as yet uncovered, started up everywhere, and lent to the whole scene the appearance of some hasty encampment. White oxen passed in procession, drawing heavy wagon loads of peasants to the fields, and great lunging black buffaloes with fiery eyes were driven along.

The crowd itself seemed nothing short of a prize show of costume and type. Here were Roumanian women in their pale clinging garments, gorgeous with embroidery, their sculpturesque heads cunningly tied in black handkerchiefs, moving softly and gracefully in sandalled feet; Slavs in flat felt hats with lank hair, looking like wooden men, beside them; and Magyar men, scrupulously clean, with closely shaven chin and waxed moustaches, straight and sound and tall. In and out among the stalls flashed the cardinal-coloured top boots of the Magyar girls, whose aprons glittered with gold, and whose white sleeves sprung from tightly-buttoned zouaves embroidered like mediæval windows. They flitted about like butterflies, and held themselves coquettishly, as if quite aware of their seductive appearance. Roumanians squatted about the road in circles at breakfast, or merely gossiping, and the gipsies played their part in the scene; but Jews were altogether absent. From our balcony we watched endless little humorous incidents and dramatic episodes, but saw extremely little to hint at poverty and misery. A jolly chatter arose from the crowd, unmixed with sounds of brawling, and so genial were my impressions of those gentle peasants

that I was amazed to read in a letter that I received the other day from Hungary, that they had beaten the magistrate of Bánffy-Hunyad within an inch of his life on the suspicion of his having tampered with their election votes. This magistrate I remember as a white-haired old gentleman who smoked his pipe



in good-humoured peace, and composed delightful songs, for the playing of which upon the violin Julian received two kisses on the cheek.

A ROW OF STATELY DAMES IN
UMBRELLA-LIKE HATS.

What strange beings politics may make of us all! Later in the morning we plunged down into the crowd to inspect things closer, and won the hearts of the women by our frank admiration of their clothes.

One feature in this market amused us highly, a party of cooks. A row of stately dames in umbrella-like hats, sitting with folded arms behind a long bench, on which stood a row of green and yellow earthenware pots. Each pot was filled with red-hot charcoal, a small hole having been chipped in the side to create a draught, and crowned with a deep dish in which lumps of meat were frizzling and spitting in bacon juice. The food had a good chance of keeping warm between the cinders and the blazing sun. The cooks took life easily, just rousing themselves to extend a hand for payment, when a customer prodded out a piece of meat for himself. Julian tried to infuse into us the necessary courage for tasting the concoction, but we fell short of his expectations.

Large tracts of crockery spread over the road, the peasants' own handiwork—a fusion of gay glazed colours. The preservation and collection of pottery seemed to be quite a cult with the people of Bánffy-Hunyad, and in every cottage rows of plates and jugs which date back hundreds of years, and offer a splendid field for the study of old design and pictorial legend, are ranged in racks as a frieze to the walls, or hung from the rafters. It would be difficult

to induce a peasant to part with his family china, but luckily several members of the aristocracy have made fine collections, both of china and peasant embroideries, which are exhibited from time to time in Buda-Pest. On finding we were strangers, a woman urgently invited us to come to her home and see her Sunday clothes. We passed through a wooden doorway, upon which the old tulip pattern, so common in this district, was roughly cut, up steps, and through a verandah festooned with dried kükurut and pepper pods, into a dazzling interior. All the inmates shook or kissed our hands, and bringing us chairs, told us to look at anything and everything; and indeed it was an interior worth looking at.

All peasant houses are built somewhat on the same model, with an entrance room serving as kitchen, and containing a large square brick stove, and, to right and left, open other rooms varying in number with the prosperity of the owner. The poorer cottages have earth floors and rudimentary furniture, scrupulously clean, while the richer even rise to boards and carpets and surprising refinements in the accessories. The colour effect of a Magyar interior is always extremely beautiful. The walls

are invariably white, while under the raftered ceiling run the racks of glittering pottery, the furniture, chests and benches are daubed in primary colours used in a bold decorative way, which comes natural to a Magyar, and the massive beds are literally stacked to the ceiling with pillows, embroidered with blue, red, or rose colour. While we sketched the women, who grew self-conscious, picked up their skirts and laughed into them, Julian hovered round a gigantic chest which held him with a spell; it was brilliant red, dotted over with designs, a courageous piece of colour, and he could not decide if it would look well in his rooms at Buda-Pest. Our hostess strewed the contents of chests of house linen and wearing apparel over the floor, giving us an idea of the wealth in kind of some of these peasants. Then she offered to pose as a bride. Her face was broad-featured, with a certain handsome strength about it. She stood massively in the centre of the floor, while the other women wreathed a snow-drift of embroidered net around her head and body. Two soft-eyed children crept up to see their mother in her splendour — little innocents in tall red boots and embroidered shifts. One leant against my knee

and made work difficult, but I was far too flattered at her confidence to disturb her.

Life soon began to thicken in the yard outside, and an altercation arose between an old man selling milk from wooden tubs, slung pannier-wise across a donkey's back, and a lank gipsy who was trying to dispose of a large copper stew-pan. One of the women who had been quietly cutting up apples in an inner room charged them with a strong epithet and a stronger arm, and sent them backwards out of the gate. As we took leave we promised to come again. We felt a little shabby, for our model was so evidently crestfallen at our sketches. She had her notions about the expression of her face, which notions were embodied in a photograph representing her as a bride wearing a broad smile. It seemed we were always to leave in debt, and this time we owed a smile.

The Hungarian name for the embroideries peculiar to these peasants is "varrottas." They are worked in blue, red or black linen thread upon stout white linen or a pale ochre-coloured linen cloth with a porridged surface, and are done entirely by eye and from tradition, without patterns or guiding lines. Both thread and linen are woven at home, and the women are to be seen sitting at their windows or in

the street, working away at a great rate. Most of the patterns, which are of the highest decorative value, date back many centuries, and have their origin in some Scripture legend. The passover lamb is a favourite subject, though in many cases, where the worker has been ignorant of history, she has mistaken the lamb for a horse, and added a bridle.

We were very hospitably entertained in Madame Gyarmáthy's house, where piles of those embroideries were kept in cupboards, ready for purchasers among the richer people who are cultivating a taste for this work. It may be washed for centuries, and the reds will only have grown a rose colour, the blues a fainter tint. Fashions may come and go, but the designs are on the eternal principles of decoration, and hold their own. Madame Gyarmáthy is one of the first lady novelists in Hungary, but we could not talk to her directly, as she spoke only her native tongue, her youth having been passed at a period when German was held in abhorrence, and all patriotic Magyars refused to learn it. In spite of the gay peasant maid-servants, the widely dissimilar local colouring and household detail, the moral tone diffused by the lady of the house was so

uncommonly English that I had continually to remind myself that I was in Transylvania; until entering the dining-room for the midday meal, the likeness suddenly vanished, for at the head and foot of the table sat the mistress and master of the house, solemnly waving long green branches to and fro. Was it to keep the flies off? Was it the survival of some ancient rite? We shall never know.



CHAPTER XIV.

KOLOSVÁR.

“ALL hail to the great high-born duchesses!”

With this remarkable sentence did the hotel proprietress at Kolosvár greet us, as she advanced and presented us with a large bouquet of roses. So many kind friends had interviewed her, relative to our arrival, on behalf of Count Esterházy, that by the time we drove up in the burgomeister’s carriage the whole establishment was in a flutter. A detachment of waiters rushed forward to secure our baggage, and then bidding us follow, started upstairs at a quick trot, which we obligingly imitated, not feeling sure what hidden cause there might be for haste, so that we all arrived at a run at a regal suite of apartments, softly carpeted and hung with crimson velvet. We were highly embarrassed by the proprietress’s welcome, and felt that unless rescue came we should do something miserably out of keeping with our fictitious rank; so that no sooner did Julian and the Mayor, who as usual had followed

in another carriage, set foot in the Hôtel than we begged them to explain to her our real insignificance. The poor lady retained to the last a vague idea that if not propitiated, we could exercise our pens and our pencils in a way that would blast her reputation, and at meal times she hovered in circles round our table with such an anxious face that we felt morally obliged to force a look of glad surprise as each new dish appeared.

Kolosvár, besides being the capital of Transylvania, is an important university town, a military centre, the headquarters of the Unitarian faith, which is widely spread in this part of the country, and during the winter months the scene of much aristocratic festivity. In size, it very nearly approaches our own city of Oxford, with whose streets I am so familiar that I feel I ought to draw some comparison between the two Universities. But even if I had the necessary intelligence, I have not sufficient data to go upon, and any such attempt would probably only show their utter unlikeness. Oxford, of world-wide fame, has had centuries in which to grow and ripen, and Kolosvár, thanks to Transylvania's unhappy history, is only in its infancy, and although full of intellectual ferment, can boast only 63 pro-

fessors, 19 tutors, 12 demonstrators, and 607 students, and a foundation dating from 1872. There is, however, now one intimate small link between Kolosvár and Oxford, for she sends one of her prize students every three years, to study English and the Unitarian religion, to Manchester New College.

The inhabitants of Kolosvár are remarkable for pluck, and one of their most striking ventures is an Angol Club (English Club) composed of a number of citizens who meet every week, and read and speak English very creditably, although the majority of the members have never been near our shores, and many have never met an Englishman. If there is no likeness between the two Universities, there is a remarkable similarity between their professors; a thorough classical seasoning has a wonderful leveling effect.

The morning after our arrival we followed a grey-headed old gentleman in and out of doors and buildings in search of ancient Latin inscriptions. The bending outline of his back, and the conscientious tones in which he deciphered every letter on the moulding tablets were quite familiar to me. This pursuit of antiquity led us into private houses, but chiefly into backyards and cellars, and I rather think

we were retracing the departed glories of aristocratic houses, but my knowledge of Latin is too vague to admit of a definite conclusion on this point. The building, of a deep ochre tint, however, which stands in the centre of the town, aroused our interest, for within its walls the great king Mathias Corvinus was born in 1443. One of the many graceful acts by which the present Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary has won the heart of the Magyars is connected with this building. When visiting it a few years ago, he inquired of the Mayor if there were nothing to mark it out as the birthplace of the greatest Magyar king. On receiving an answer in the negative, he presented the town with three hundred florins to be expended in erecting a tablet for the purpose.

At the end of a day's diligent sight-seeing, a heavy cloud fell upon us. Calling at the post-office, Julian received a letter summoning him to Buda-Pest on urgent business. Our unselfish aide-de-camp, who was popular everywhere, and had made everything so easy for us, had grown almost indispensable to our travels, and blank dismay fell upon us. He pictured every possible misfortune that could befall us; we imagined our plight on arriving at strange

houses without an interpreter. This little difficulty, and the way we were pulled out of it, was one of the many revelations we had of the Magyar's limitless kindness. Early that morning, a small red guide book to Transylvania, written in the Magyar tongue, and with the printer's ink hardly dry upon its pages, had arrived at our Hôtel as a present from the secretary of the E.M.K.E. Society (*Erdeivrészi Magyar Közművelodesi Edyesolet*), which had agents and members in every town and village of any importance, all bent heart and soul on furthering Magyar interests and enterprises, and on spreading the study of Magyar among the foreign portion of the population. It occurred to Julian that some good results might ensue from explaining the situation to the secretary of this society. We found a dark gentleman with soft and courteous manners sitting in a bare room containing, by way of ornament, the society's banner in a glass case. Upon the table before him we spread a list of the places that we intended to visit, and informed him that our object was to see and to sketch things in general. In a very short time he had made an elaborate scheme for our benefit, and expressed sincere regret that he could neither offer us his personal escort, nor at that

moment think of any one fitted for so delicate a post. He gave us a creamy sheet of paper, upon which was written in an exquisite hand, that the bearers, two English ladies, were travelling under the ægis of the Society, and that it behoved all loyal-hearted Magyars meeting the said ladies to further their interests in every possible manner. He begged us to telegraph to him in case of difficulty, and promised that he would himself send messages to members in every town upon our programme, requesting them to wait upon us. If a more striking proof than this were needed of Hungarian courtesy, it is furnished in the fact that we never once needed to produce this paper, or to apply for help. That night, Julian steamed off to Buda-Pest, after having left us the Magyar formula for a telegram announcing our arrival at a given place.

We were somewhat surprised next morning at the slenderness of the Hôtel bill for our stately apartments; it was not till some time later that we found we had been charged half-price for everything. Count Esterházy, in his thoughtfulness, had asked the burgomeister to see that we were not imposed upon, and the poor proprietress, still in mortal dread of our supposed powers, had thought it better to

keep well on the safe side. At the station we found the secretary, who took our tickets and then looked anxiously around in search of a friend who might be travelling in our direction. His eye fell upon a tall picturesque figure in shooting clothes, and immediately brightened. This attractive being was introduced as Count L—, and we were bundled with him into a saloon carriage, and never saw the secretary again. In thinking over this summer ramble, there rises, from end to end of Hungary, a chain of kind faces, all waving good-bye to the train or carriage that bore us away. To our great relief, Count L—'s French ran fluently, and he at once interested himself in our travels, and suggested some radical alterations in our programme. As an artist and a lover of wild nature, railroads were loathsome to him, and he urged us to strike out several towns on our list and make for a mountain region that was practically unknown. He talked of the beauty there, the sport, the almost savage peasantry in the valleys, till his eyes glowed, and he waved his hands in an enthusiasm which quickly spread to us. As an added inducement to follow his advice, he talked affectionately of an English general whom we should find hidden in a mountain

watering-place named Borsek, and explained that if it were not for his daughter's approaching marriage, which kept him at home, he himself would have shown us the Transylvania, which artists should see. We took leave of him at Szamós Ujvár, which was down as our next halting-place, and promised on arriving at Besztercze the next day to drive over to his shooting-box and dine with him. As we alighted, he called loudly from the window, "Burgomeister." A voice replied from the crowd, which opened to permit a little old man to advance, and we were left with the burgomeister, who at once proceeded to explain that he was not that dignitary, but would do as well, pending his absence.

Szamós Ujvár is chiefly remarkable as the home of a colony of Armenians, who have preserved their language and facial type, and are intensely proud of their origin, although the Magyars consider them only one degree less despicable than the Jews. We remember it chiefly as the extremely hot site of a confusion of tongues, and a background for processions of black buffaloes. The deputy mayor, anxious to show us a real Armenian type, introduced us into a household where a beautiful daughter posed for us. When calm, he could speak a little German, but in

this hospitable circle he became extremely elated, and relapsed into Hungarian and Armenian. We found ourselves thus without an interpreter and powerless to thank these kind people, or apologise for the unseemly conduct of our escort, with whose vagaries we sincerely trusted that they were familiar. When once we had induced him to go quietly home we forgave him freely, for it was obviously the unwonted dignity of posing as burgomeister and playing cicerone for two English ladies that had turned his head.

Next morning, as we journeyed towards Besztercze we felt delightfully alone and off parade in a compartment to ourselves. I spread my handkerchief on my knees, and made a great mess over hacking up fruit with a penknife, while we both tried to remember how we had promised to get over to the shooting-box, and where we had telegraphed to over night. We had meekly picked out the name written by Count Esterházy beside Besztercze on our programme, and had despatched a telegram on faith. Whenever the train stopped, at a hint from the guard a number of passengers had a look in through our window, and directly we left the station at Betlèn, that official himself threw open the door

of our compartment with the remark, "Here they are!" A gentleman entered, who bowed and said in excellent English, "Have I the honour to address the English ladies? I present myself as Count Bethlen; I expected you two days ago." So this was our host for Besztercze? But what was he doing here? and why had he discovered us at our disgustingly messy lunch? I can only say that in Hungary people have a way of appearing and disappearing while travelling, that I had previously supposed to be peculiar to the characters in "Alice in Wonderland." It was pleasant to discover that our new acquaintance was a friend of Count L——, and was quite willing to drive us over to the shooting-box, but then, as Miranda whispered to me, there are still the E.M.K.E. people and the burgomeister; what a terrible confusion if they should all come to meet us! We grew quite nervous as the train stopped. Count Bethlen's valet took possession of our bags, and led us to a carriage. About six gentlemen rushed up, introducing themselves as E.M.K.E. members. One called out, "You are invited to Count L——. Do you accept?" "We accept!" I replied with energy, sure of that one fact. As we drove off, a carriage came dashing towards us at a

furious rate; catching sight of us, the coachman pulled up, and turning round followed us. "That must be the burgomeister going to meet you; he is late!" remarked Count Bethlen. We began to think it might be awkward to belong to too many people. The Count's house was being repaired previous to receiving the King for some military review, so that



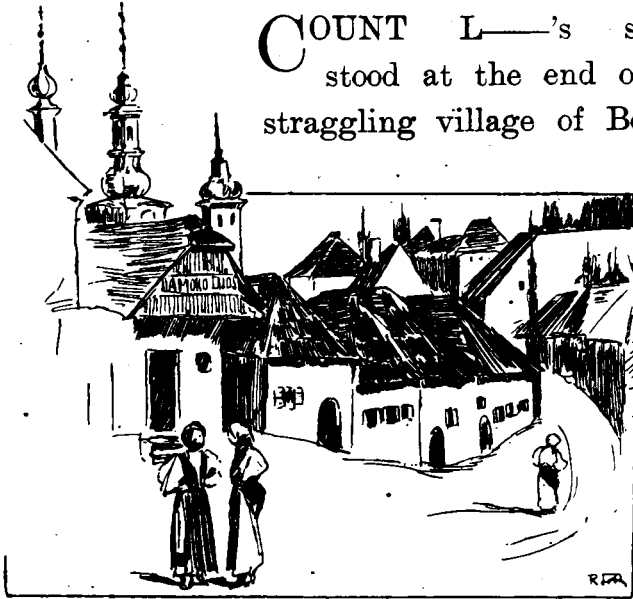
WATER-PITCHER.

he engaged us rooms in the Hôtel. It was midday when we arrived, and as it would be impossible to reach Borgo Prund (the shooting-box) till late in the afternoon, we decided on a light lunch in the Hôtel. During the course of this frugal meal, the gentlemen from the station reappeared, and each in turn offered to do us some service. The burgomeister proposed to have twenty peasants dressed in their best for us

to sketch, and the clergyman of a neighbouring village promised us a similar treat if we would visit him at the breakfast hour next day. Unless I take the following twenty-four hours somewhat in detail, I can never give an idea of the utter confusion of mind that resulted from too much good-will on the part of our hosts, and too small a grip of the language on ours. We drove off to Borgo Prund deeply steeped in vague promises.

CHAPTER XV.

TOO MANY FRIENDS.



MAROS VÁSÁRHELY.

COUNT L——'s shooting-box stood at the end of the long straggling village of Borgo Prund,

close to a stream that came churning and boiling down from the mountain. Up in their wooded

heights, high up, for it was only August, lurked the bears, that would descend at harvest-time in search of food, perhaps close down to the village gardens, and provide sport for the "bear club"

that assembles yearly under Count L——'s roof. These picked sportsmen must have a fine time of it from all accounts. They camp out for a week or two on the mountain side, taking peasants with them, who pitch the tents, cook, and keep the watch-fires burning, and there they lead a regular Robin Hood life. When sport is over for the day, and they have dined, they sing as Hungarians only can when their blood is up, and tell wild tales, and not infrequently fight duels, to their hearts' content. All this I learned from the one foreigner among their number, the Anglo-Indian general, whom later we saw in the flesh at Borszék. An iron cage, containing a tame bear, stood in the yard behind the shooting-box, and the walls of the rooms within were hung with gigantic glossy black skins. To our surprise these walls were also hung with a rare collection of Hungarian china, both old and new, some of the most decorative specimens of the latter being from the Count's own hand. Old costumes and embroideries, some masterly bits of painting, antique furniture, and musical instruments were strewn about, and these collections represented only a few of the Count's tastes and hobbies.

He again waxed eloquent over the tour he proposed for us among the mountains, and sat down and wrote a letter introducing us to the General. He also promised that, if we followed his advice, we should spend a night or two in his ruined family castle, where an agent of his was living, who would show us the neighbourhood. If we had hesitated before, that turned the scale. Nights to be passed in a ruined castle in the wilds was too romantic a prospect to be missed. The Count made another and more immediate plan for our benefit.

By the evening of the following day we were due at Maros-Vásárhely. It would be possible to reach this town by train in a slow and circuitous fashion, but at trains the Count curled his lip. By hiring a carriage, we could join him and his brother across a wild tract of country, lunch at a friendly château, reach the station of Szász-Régen by the evening, and so arrive at our destination after only twenty minutes of train. It is characteristic of Hungary that even in the most uncultivated and thinly populated tracts telegraphic and railway communication is possible. If we had been given to hesitating, which we were not, as the reader will by this time have discovered, we could not have done so

for want of confidence in our new-found friend. Benevolence was written on every feature. He was journeying to Maros Vásárhely for his daughter's wedding, and further invited us to his château to meet his family. We bid adieu to Borgo Prund with a hazy notion that we were to start at eleven next morning from the hotel in a carriage some one would secure, to some place whose name as usual we could not pronounce. Several hours later we drove back into Besztercze and passed a row of well-lighted windows from whence came sounds of cheering. Count Bethlen pulled out his watch with an alarmed face: "That is a dinner given in my honour, and I am an hour late. I shall say," he said with a smile, "*c'était la faute des Anglaises.*" He left us at the hotel with an assurance that instead of tiring ourselves by visiting the village next morning, which we had promised the pastor to do, he would send a cart to bring the peasants to us. In the dining-room we found a professor, a member of the E.M.K.E. Society, his wife and several friends waiting to have supper with us. A waiter put a telegram into my hands bearing the simple address, "The English Artists, Transylvania," which contained the news that Julian would

meet us again in Maros Vásárhely, where his brother's family were staying.

Absolutely exhausted, after an evening spent in satisfying preternaturally inquiring minds, we went to sleep, more firmly convinced than ever that our only troubles could come from too much kindness. A violent thunderstorm awoke us next morning, and to our intense relief absolved us from any necessity of visiting the public buildings of the town. We decided to abandon the carriage project for the railway, though we were assured by some the journey would take us thirty hours, by others, one hour. As we were finishing breakfast with Count Bethlen the pastor arrived, dripping wet, not having received the message altering the arrangements, and in despair at our not coming. Almost simultaneously, an unusually tall being, clad in green and silver uniform, presented himself, as "Baron —— at our service." The carriage stood waiting, the pastor's entreaties were urgent, so the Baron had only to hold open the door for us and vanish, "and he," as Miranda said regretfully, "the most picturesque man we have seen in Hungary!" As we rattled along, the good old parson poured out a lot of information, historical and other, which we

were far too bewildered to take in. When we entered the village street, a carriage met us at full dash, pulled up, and out came Count L——'s head.

“What *are* you doing here? You are coming with me to-day. Wet! nonsense; it will be splendid later. Turn round and follow me back.”

The pastor protested, and finally won leave to keep us for half an hour.

We found ourselves in a Saxon village, and in the cool, simple vicarage were huddled a group of exquisitely garbed peasants, trembling with shyness, having been dressed and waiting for us for hours. What could we do for them in return in a few brief minutes! We felt quite guilty at being the cause of such preparations. A dainty breakfast was spread for us, and two gentle fair-haired daughters kissed us, and waited on us, and as we left, joined their father in begging us to be their guests if we should ever fancy painting in their village. Once more within sight of the Hôtel we calculated on five minutes in which to fasten our bags, before starting in a carriage to—goodness knew where!

A waiter rushed to the carriage door.

“ They are waiting for you in the salon ! ”

“ Who ? ”

“ Twenty peasants. The burgomeister has sent them to be sketched.”

I have a vague recollection that the waiter did our packing, that we made a few hasty sketches, that the peasants all gave us nosegays, and flocked round the carriage, as the waiter bundled us in, with the encouraging words that the driver had his orders and the Count's had started before us ; and then, without a chance of thanking any one for having nearly killed us with too much kindness, we were off, and in a few more minutes we were both asleep. Please remember that we were only poor artists, whose brains reel in a moment, and that we had seen and attempted to absorb an impossible load of impressions in the space of two hours. When I awoke, for Miranda recovered first and aroused me with jeers at my torpor, we were in the midst of an absolutely barren, hilly country, without a tree or a sign of cultivation, but sad-coloured undulating earth everywhere, and no obvious road. In a valley before us lay a dot of a white building. The driver pointed to it with his whip, for intercourse with speech was denied us, and nodded. We

supposed it was all right, and if it wasn't, the situation was not in our hands: so we smiled and nodded back. The two Count L.—'s had arrived at the château before us, and to our joy, were on the steps to claim and introduce us. We were regaled with a gay and noisy lunch, at which several generations, and French and German tutors and governesses were present. The family were loath to let us go, begging us to stay the night and criticise their play of lawn tennis; but it was impossible, and a couple of hours after our arrival, we were again on our way. This time, our carriage being close behind that of the Count's, which bristled with fishing rods and guns, we made use of the opportunity to gaze undisturbed on the two singularly handsome and distinguished back views before us, and tried to decide where the national touches predominated in the outline. The younger brother wore a careless white linen suit, against which his dark skin looked a still deeper brown, and his blue eyes and brown hair less fair. As the sun got lower, and long shadows streaked the hills, we began to lag, and finally to lose sight of the other carriage. The horses seemed dead beat, and to make matters worse, we came to a steep hill, where the ground

was of the consistency of a ploughed field. We got out and helped to push the wheels, remembering our óverset on the way to Pusztafalu only too well. Soon the Count returned and used such desperate threats to the driver, that even the horses seemed scared into a spurt. We reached the little station in the nick of time, and as we steamed to Maros Vásárhely we listened to a lively discussion on Napoleon and Tolstoi's "War and Peace;" for military tactics seemed to be another hobby of these versatile brothers.

Next day Count L—— sent a carriage and four to fetch us to his château. A forestallment of wedding guests were already assembled there. Eighty were eventually to be housed where we English might think twenty a tight fit; but Magyars would rather make shift for quarters and be sociable and merry, than stand out for comfort and hold aloof. I should not like to have attempted to unravel the relationships of that household, but to the culture of the feminine portion I can bear witness. I strolled in the garden with no less than six distinct ladies, and each one spoke good English and good French. There was a French tutor, moreover, who played tennis worse than I did, for

which I could have embraced him, so great was my mortification in not being able to do my countrywomen justice when called upon to display this national accomplishment.

CHAPTER XVI.

UP HILL AND DOWN DALE.



WALLACK PEASANT.

WE now arranged to leave railways behind and push on into the wilds. Accordingly, before sunrise one morning we left Szász-Régen in a vehicle bearing some faint resemblance to a victoria; that had fallen on evil days, which was drawn by two horses, a third being somewhat vaguely attached to the right of the pair by a leathern strap and trotting off at a tangent the whole time. We never could discover the use of the third

beast; it could not have done any work, and never changed places with either of the others. All three

were sorry-looking creatures; but the amount they got through was amazing. For seven days they were on the go, from five in the morning till midday, when we usually halted for an hour or two, and again for four or five hours more in the afternoon, without slackening a steady pace or showing signs of great fatigue. To all appearances that carriage might have contained the victims of an eviction. Behind the box seat came a hedge of sticks, whips, and umbrellas, and the tops of our "hold alls," which were all firmly strapped against the small back seat. Miranda and I sank among leather cushions and had leather pockets at our elbows, containing a good deal of personal property. Enough hay was roped to the back to give the whole turn-out the appearance from behind of a haystack running away, and a tin pail slung from the box seat bumped a musical accompaniment to the flight. Later on, when the horses had eaten the hay level with the top of the carriage, it formed a delightful seat upon which Miranda and I could sit and get a more extended view.

For seven days the sun blazed in a cloudless sky, and for seven nights the stars glittered above us, and at the end of the time the hay was

gone, the horses were thinner, and we were converted into veritable Tziganes. Our teeth and eyes gleamed from skin of such a hue, that you could never have believed us to be natives of Great Britain. I should not like to say through how many villages we passed in a day, nor how many more we saw to right and left of us, in the broad valley of the Maros. We drove through several markets and had some exciting moments, as a human sea came surging round the carriage, clamouring, gesticulating, and offering every conceivable thing for sale, tempting us to buy recklessly; so that it was only when we got more into silence and the wilderness, that we could anxiously examine our purses and see if we were ruined. Before long our "hold alls" became so congested and showed such signs of bulging on to our seat, that we were forced from motives of self-preservation to stop buying. All along the river—for the Maros is a mountain stream, foaming in winter, but broad and shallow in summer—rafts of pine trunks lay stranded, waiting to continue their downward journey when the waters should rise. Rough wooden huts were dotted along the banks, in which the peasants who were conducting these rafts on their long journeys sat and

contemplated Nature during the months or weeks of waiting. Where the valley narrowed, the hills became mountains, densely covered with pine forests, and frowning over the broad stream in rocky nakedness: where it widened, corn fields spread to right and left, and the mountains retreated in blue sweeps. One village in particular lingers in our affections. I have forgotten its name, but there it lies in the valley of the Maros, just where the frontier peaks are traced against the horizon, waiting for the artist, who shall be worthy of it. We had reached it just at lunch time, so made it our mid-day resting place, and strolled out from the little inn in search of a nook for a siesta. Roumanian women sat singing and spinning in the sunlight along the village street, but we turned from them, and struck across some fields, where the maize grew higher than our heads, and came upon a rude wooden church, of most weird shape to our western eyes. We threw ourselves down among the maize and stared at the sky, until the sounds of a scythe were audible, when, peeping through the long stalks, we could see a peasant at work on the long rank grass of the churchyard. Three little children were tumbling and playing in the green hay beside him, in angelic

nudity. It was evidently their normal state to be without clothes, for their smooth brown limbs had a freedom of movement that could never belong to wearers of even light garments. They soon discovered us and played quite happily around us, as if we were the most familiar creatures. They decoyed us to a rushing stream which turned a rough grindstone. Two splendid fellows, garbed in white, with green boughs bound round their black hair, were sharpening knives. At the sight of our sketch-books they covered their faces, and then ran a little distance away, and hid behind trees, for fear of the evil eye.

On the second day we drew near Borsék, famous for its effervescing iron waters. A good military road is carved out of the forest, and climbs gradually upwards, till a panorama of peaks is gained, and Borszék is reached. Here we found our compatriot, whose praises had been sprinkled all along our route. What a delight it was to plunge into our native tongue and to talk to our hearts' content for several hours, confirming impressions and correcting mistakes by his knowledge; for the General was half a Magyar, having spent many summers in their company. He was the only

Englishman we *saw* in Hungary, although you will remember we *heard* one before. In spite of this attraction, we left Borszék early next day, determined to reach the most romantic item on our programme, Gyérgyó, Count L——'s ruined castle, by nightfall. It would be necessary to make a long halt at a village at midday, and the director of Borszék gave us a letter recommending us to the mercy of the doctor of the place; for no one else in the village was supposed to be master of the German tongue. We left the little settlement of châteaux and bath houses in company with a procession of covered carts exporting bottles of the powerful Borszék water by a slow and painfully crawling process, up and down hills to the nearest station. The great ragged mountains of the Roumanian frontier rose up behind us, as definite a natural barrier to all appearances, as any two races could want. Nevertheless a smouldering border warfare still exists. The Roumanian side is guarded by military, ready to kidnap any passportless straggler, and take him in triumph to Bucharest. It is extremely difficult to trace the exact moment when one leg may be over the frontier, and sportsmen and scientists provide themselves with peasant guides who undertake to trace for them the magic line.

Petty, though not bloodless, skirmishes constantly take place among peasants of the border land, who are for ever avenging some capture. The exit from the valley was stiffish work, in spite of an admirable military road; we looked down upon one pine-covered height after another, and finally won an ocean of distant blue mountain-tops. When no interpreter was at hand our intercourse with Sándor (the coachman) was simple: we jerked our heads forward when we wanted to start, and pulled his coat when we wished to stop, and he was mightily pleased with himself at understanding us.

The first few hours of the day's drive took us through a landscape of exhilarating wildness. Vegetation had been rank and wanton, breathing of virgin Nature, and the population had consisted solely of wood-cutters, herdsmen, and straggling gipsies. Now the mountains gave place to a very different type of hill, covered with long stripes of burned grass alternating with corn and ploughed land. The formation of the hills in peculiar swelling lines produced a queer effect, such as may be seen in miniature when wind gets under a carpet and bulges it up and down.

At length we saw our destination in the distance.

The last tree had disappeared from the landscape, and a great shadowless cultivated plain lay before us, dotted with brown thirsty-looking villages, each one with its long-necked whitewashed church. I only say *thirsty-looking*, for I have yet to see the Hungarian or Transylvanian village without its running stream—no stagnant ditch or duckpond focussing the village drainage, but clear spirited water coming usually at a good pace from the mountains. I drew the letter from my pocket to reassure myself, only to see that frequent dives after it with “lead-pencilly” fingers had left their traces. I hastily transferred it to Sándor’s keeping, hoping the marks would be attributed to him. We put on a little pace—it was nearly ten o’clock, and the heat was growing intense—and soon entered the dusty village streets.

Nearly every other cottage had an enormous carved gateway, with a dove-cote contrived in the top cross-beam, entirely out of proportion with the modest whitewashed or wooden building standing behind, and decorated with primitive carvings, as well as with brief family records. The tent-shaped wooden roofs, the general wooden and rough appearance everywhere, and the entire absence of any

architectural fancy in the construction of the cottages, gave a very impromptu and camp-like appearance to the whole village. The walls came sheer to the road, or stood closely behind wooden plank fences, and were so uniform, so unrelieved by green or anything cheering to the eye, that it was difficult to believe that they had served generations of thrifty well-to-do peasants, and enclosed, in the majority of cases, very bright and charming interiors. A small irregular square of more pretentious whitewashed buildings disclosed itself, and as usual, the most ambitious piece of architecture proved to be the chemist's shop. One of the most striking things in Hungary is the size and excellence of the village *pharmacies*, and one of the many surprises that await travellers is the culture of the chemist behind the counter, who will answer you in two or three languages. The profession of chemists stands somewhat higher socially than in other countries, and its ranks seem to be filled with a very energetic body of men, who usually serve for a year or so in the shops of the various great European capitals, and then settle down in their native country, maintaining a high standard of professional excellence. These *pharmacies* are mostly of very

recent date, and form another illustration of the astonishing and thorough progress Hungary has made in the last forty years.

Sándor whipped on out of the square, although we had quite decided that the doctor must live there, and finally pulled up in a street boasting not a square inch of shade. A low whitewashed house, with a coat of arms over the gateway and deliciously cool-looking green shutters, stood on our left, and it was cheering to see Sándor rap at that particular door with the not spotless note in his hand. After a long delay, in which the cushions of the carriage had time to grow positively scorching, a woman appeared with her head tied in a handkerchief, and glanced at the envelope and at us in a scared way. How inviting the green of the courtyard looked through the open door! She shut the gate, and Sándor remounted the box and remained sitting. What did it mean? Presently a red-faced peasant child emerged from the yard with the note in her hand, and ran down the street. Evidently the doctor was on his rounds and must be fetched. That unfortunate child panted from house to house, and always returned to the starting point with the note. For our part, we seemed to be swelling with the heat and to be of an intense red,

and a small group of villagers was gathering round the carriage. There was a cruelty in the situation, almost as if the natives were collecting to see two foreigners roasted alive. We understood the art of remaining passive, and allowing a situation to develop, to perfection; but under the present conditions the rôle of inaction was attended with positive peril.

There must have been something odd about that doctor's temper for the members of his household not to have taken the risk of admitting us. At a cottage window to our right, the face of a black bearded man had contemplated us with undisguised interest. From a pole stuck under the roof dangled a glass, a hoop, and a bunch of hay. Thinking these mysteries might symbolize an inn, I beckoned. He came with alacrity, and we tried him with a German word. It took no effect, so we shook our heads with a melancholy "*nem értem*" (I don't understand), and he remained gazing, with his elbow on the carriage. Then a woman with a charming smile ran out and gave us two quaint little posies from the garden behind. The little crowd brightened at this; we could see they were growing uneasy as to their reputation for hospitality, and were trying to urge some course of action on Sándor. Don't imagine he

had been silent all this while. No showman was ever prouder of his show, and the ever-recurring "*Angol*" in his talk, left no doubt that he was enlarging on our habits and customs. At last the woman appeared again at the doctor's gate and beckoned him. He returned with two more nosegays. Then I was sure of the doctor's temper, and standing upright in the carriage, said two of my twelve Hungarian words, "*Elöre, Szálloda*" (Forward, Hôtel) trusting that one of those queer cottages considered itself an inn. Sándor cheered up at once, and made for a neighbouring gateway, which several women ran forward to open. We drove into a yard and pulled up under a shed, facing a blank wall. This was a change for the better, for we were in shade; but did they mean us to sit here till the doctor's return? "*Szálloda,*" we said again in an inquiring and slightly disappointed tone. Sándor pointed with his whip to a building on the opposite side of the yard, and we got down, and turning the corner, found a large group of peasants eager to show us the room. Spacious, shady, and clean, it seemed a Paradise. We sat down, the villagers coming in one by one to peep at us, and finally a greyhaired man, in the cloth garments of civilisation, and obviously a Jew, came

right in and bowed. Some one had given him our note and he read it, which of course he had no right to do; but we had lost faith in the doctor, and hoped to secure his help. He spoke little, very little, German. The good woman of the inn wore a harassed expression at the unexpected honour that had befallen her, and was greatly relieved when the old man made it clear that we only wanted to eat, and would go away later in the day.

When we had got rid of our admirers, although we knew that those old gateways, that quaint square, and a hundred fascinating things were waiting in the blazing sun to be sketched, we took down two of the snowy pillows from the tall bed in the corner, and went sound asleep on the two familiar-looking black mohair sofas.

In about an hour I awoke. There was a decided excitement in the air; something unusual was happening in the street outside. I could see through the window, several peasant faces wearing a look of triumph and expectation, all turned in one direction up the street. I opened the door, and down a perfect little avenue of human beings there walked towards me, brilliant in blue and gold, a young officer. The village had done it! It had saved its reputation and

procured a fluent German speaker in the person of this elegant visitor from Buda-Pest. From the relief and pleasure painted on every face it was possible to judge how great the previous anxiety of these simple creatures had been.

In a few minutes we were walking beside our cavalier, who was nervously trying to convince us that although he was entirely at our service, there positively was nothing to show us, that indeed the only incident that had characterized his several weeks' stay in Ditro, was the capture of some crayfish in a neighbouring stream. At this juncture we met a springless carriage, containing a dark, silent-looking man. Instinct left us no doubt that here we had the doctor. He stopped and exchanged a few words with the officer, resolutely keeping his back turned to us, while we modestly traced channels in the dust with the tips of our parasols. Then the doctor continued his way on foot, the carriage turned round, and we were invited to get in and use it for obtaining a general view of the village. So it was only a personal encounter the doctor dreaded. It transpired that rumour had been too generous, and had endowed him with accomplishments he did not possess—he spoke only Hungarian. We bumped along in

the carriage down street after street, each as devoid of green, each as dusty and impromptu-looking as the other.

The young officer unaffectedly made the best of things, and when we had described a circle round the village took us to his home, and introduced us not only to his parents but to some remarkable jam made of rose leaves, and peculiarly fragrant. On the top of the jam we returned to dinner at the inn, the officer soon following with a dish of cray-fish of his catching, which he cooked, and we all ate with our fingers, by way of dessert. The sun had got lower, and our energies reviving, we shook him warmly by the hand and set out again.

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG THE SECKLERS.

IN an appropriate sunset light we drew up before the doorway of Gyérgyó, a long melancholy ruin, forgotten and neglected-looking, yet with a lingering trace of elegance and luxury in the mouldering sculpture of its windows. There are buildings that seem only to have existed that they may fulfil and perfect their beauty in decay, but this was not of their number. The château had been designed for a joyous life, and in its old age it resembled the wreck of a beautiful woman seen in strong sunlight. For nearly six centuries it had enjoyed a precarious existence, now devastated by Tartars, now destroyed by fire, always the home of the L——'s, one of Hungary's most powerful families, whose friendship was sought by princes, and finally met its downfall in the momentous year of 1848. Since then, bailiffs have inhabited a few rooms patched together in the heart of the ruin, trees wave their branches in the ban-

queting hall, and pale vestiges of frescos and ochre and red decorations stray about on all the outer walls. The castle stood at the edge of a corn-covered plain, circled by distant blue mountains and backed by a smooth green hill.

It seemed that neither the bailiff nor his wife, who had received instructions from Count L——, could show us enough kindness. The latter costumed herself in Seckler dress, and sat weaving at her loom that we might sketch her as a charming silhouette, against a window which framed a prospect of crumbling white chimneys and opal mountains. A balcony ran the length of the reclaimed portion of the building, overlooking a courtyard, and from there, still noticeable in the growing dusk, a white ecclesiastical-looking building could be seen glimmering on the top of the hill, and the tones of a small bell came not altogether harshly down the night air. On hearing it was a Franciscan monastery, a longing to visit it came surging into my mind. Forbidding walls enclosing hidden and dedicated lives always cast a spell over me; I want to see beyond with the unadulterated curiosity of a daughter of Eve. The bailiff told us that it would be an easy task to visit it, for he knew the three followers of St. Francis, personally, who

tenanted the monastery and lived, the three of them, on fifteen pounds a year and what their land yielded.

Early next morning saw me toiling up the hill with our host, drawn on as a needle to the magnet, for Miranda did not share this curiosity. The Franciscan order only made its appearance in Transylvania about two centuries back, and this particular monastery had been no luckier than an average Hungarian building, and had had its share of fire and destruction. But there it stood now, white, symmetrical and smiling in the sunlight. We entered an outer gateway and climbed up a steep flight of covered steps into a modest cloister, enclosing a green grass plot and a small border of simple sweet-smelling flowers. We put our heads unsuccessfully into several rooms, and finally came upon a friar, in black cassock and white girdle, smoking a cigarette over the remains of his breakfast. It was quite cheering to my preconceived notions to find that tobacco was not a forbidden fruit, or rather weed. The principal friar, of somewhat rotund figure, soon appeared to welcome us, and did the honours of the library, a tiny book-lined room, some six feet square. When we had glanced at the slender store of books, he pointed to the ceiling with a jolly laugh, and announced "The armoury." Above

the book-shelves dangled the shields and helmets of pasteboard and gilt paper in which a handful of scholars had strutted through some play. An air of simple contentment lay upon the place. In spite of the poverty of the rooms, they one and all had a sweep of view from the windows that more than furnished them with beauty and interest. The third friar, a very young one, joined us and shook hands ; and then the little colony stood before our eyes. The superior called upon us to look down and admire the flower patch. A whispering and something like giggling arose between the other two, and by the time we reached the chapel the young one had disappeared.

The chapel was at once faded and florid in appearance, and was hung round with the arms of various great families, and contained some exquisite tapestries and brocade. Looking up from examining an old carved chair, I saw that the party was again complete, and that the youngest friar stood in the doorway, looking uncomfortable and shy, his hands rather clumsily trying to conceal something they held. The time came to depart, and it was necessary to pass by the youth, whose face was becoming pinker every moment. As we stepped out into the cloister a scuffling sound arose behind, and then up

came the young friar, with a plunging bow and a fiery blush, and put a little nosegay of stocks and mignonette gathered from that flower patch into my hand. They all stood on the steps and watched us till we reached the castle; visitors had not been an every-day occurrence in their lives.

Not a stone's throw from the château were quarries of white marble, said to be finer than that of Carrara. A deserted studio containing fragments of statuary stood close by. In the streams and by the pathways lay great flawless blocks, the garden walls of the cottages were of marble, the pigsties were of marble, the roads were mended with marble, and marble boulders lay about the ground. The quarries were mere scratches in the hillside, for the wealth in the heart of the mountain is still unworked. Railways and workmen are still many long Hungarian miles distant, and a monastery stands on the top of it all, of brick and plaster! An Italian artist, it seems, had built and worked in the now large desolate room, modelled and chiselled his statues, and then departed with them along those doubtful roads, and the place knew him no more. Now the studio, with unlimited rights over the marble, is the property of a private individual

of Buda-Pest, and is to be rented for the modest sum of ten pounds a year. Nothing that we came upon during our travels gave us more forcibly the impression of the undeveloped wealth of the country than this profusion of idle marble; for miles on our onward journey lay glittering white heaps ready for mending the roads.

We had not intended to linger more than one day in Gyérgyó, but the bailiff persuaded us to remain a second, that we might visit "Gyilkostó," a lake belonging to Count L——, that was not only unique, but had the strange recommendation of being a "new" one, having sprung into existence in 1834, owing to the subsidence of a mountain. A picnic party was speedily organized, consisting chiefly of schoolboys. Our way lay through an absolutely wild landscape, deserted, save for a stray shepherd, and up such stiff hills that our carriages required a good deal of assistance from behind. After several hours of alternately riding and pushing we arrived at a deep pine-clad ravine leading to the lake itself, which burst upon our sight with all the weirdness of some creation by Gustave Doré. A forest of bleached pine trunks stood erect in the water, others floated on the surface, or lay sunk in

the mud at the bottom of the lake. Mountains with rocky caps shut it tightly in; down their sides, in headlong confusion, lay more pine trunks that had been torn up by the roots and arrested in their precipitous descent by the tops of other trees, some sixty years ago. At the slightest breath of wind the water lapped and washed round the dead trees and all that wealth of rotting wood with a doleful sound. Raspberry canes hung over the water, and gigantic dragon-flies and butterflies flitted about, while snakes slipped over the stones. An absolute silence hung over the place, only broken occasionally by the sound of a saw from a distant pine sawing industry. Our picnic was a merry one; the schoolboys took us little voyages on a pine raft, which they navigated with a rough paddle, but their merriment had no power against the sadness of the place, which was penetrating.

From the time we turned our backs on Gyérgyó till we reached Brasso (Kronstadt) on the south-eastern frontier, a matter of four days, our road lay through Seckler villages and primitive little watering places. The Secklers are Magyars who claim to be a branch of purer race and to have arrived in the country at an earlier date than the dwellers

on the plain. Both their villages and they themselves have distinct characteristics. They are Catholic, while the Magyars are usually followers of Calvin; they are less easy going, and more thrifty and practical. Honesty and uprightness flourish in their midst, and the stigma of theft is supposed to rest with a family for generations. Like their half-brothers, the Magyars, they are extremely hospitable, but unlike them they have lost their picturesque appearance and natural artistic instincts. In their clothes they very nearly approach the dead level of civilisation, and even their faces have grown uninteresting. I cannot dismiss those four days without some mention of Torjai Búdös, which stands out in ghastly isolation from the rest of our pilgrimage. It was a small watering-place, erected near some sulphur springs, and with a plague-stricken look upon it, as I imagine a leper settlement must have. For up on the hillsides above are sulphur caves, from which deadly exhalations continually issue, infecting the air with a hideous odour, and bleaching the rocks and trees. By the side of the pathways, leading to the caves, are crosses, marking the graves of the victims who, by accident or intention, met death within their pre-

cincts. One inhalation of the fumes, below a certain deadly line, is said to be sufficient to prove fatal, and animals running in for shelter perish instantly. At the mouth of the cave a door is erected, upon which a caution in Hungarian is written, but woe to those who cannot read it. Round the rocky sides of the interior runs a yellow line, the high tide mark of the fumes; bend your head below that line and you are dead. I shudder now when I think that I did not realize this till I had stepped well in; but fortunately the line at the entrance is only about four feet from the ground. The peasants were in the habit of paying visits to these caves to cure headache, sore eyes, etc., the air in the upper portions being good for a number of ailments. They remove their ornaments and outer garments for fear of the discolouring properties of the sulphur, and donning white wrappers they stand for hours laughing and chattering in the deadly place, their heads and shoulders well above the fatal line.

At last those seven delightful days were over, and it would be hard to say if we ourselves or our coachman were the most sorry. He had been useful to us in a hundred ways, had even manufactured Roumanian shoes for us, from squares of leather

which we bought of a Jew. The poor fellow had slept in the straw with his horses at night, and had fed himself with a few kreutzers a day ; but the time had been one of fun and holiday for him, and now he must turn his horses' heads a shorter way back to days of monotony and a hard taskmaster. His spirits visibly drooped as we reached Kronstadt, at the foot of the frontier mountains, and when at the hotel door we shook hands and said "good-bye," tears stood in his eyes.



CHAPTER XVIII.

SALT-MINES.



ROUMANIAN PEASANT.

WE could not resist a drive into Roumania, seeing we were actually on the frontier, and accordingly paid a few hours' visit to Siniai, the site of the royal summer palace of Carmen Silva, the gifted queen. Getting there and back was a matter of a few hours, and the time we had there sufficed for several casual impressions. It was a surprise to find all the cab-drivers in Russian costume, and all the male population in the latest Parisian fashions; one is so accustomed to find English tailors supreme on the Continent, that this variety was quite refreshing. The beauties of

Bucharest were promenading in the gardens, and had an air of super-conventionality and a touch of

intrigue about them that Hungarian women escape. We had been told on all sides that it would be extremely easy and agreeable to have an interview with the king—the queen was not there—but we could not rise to the occasion in the dusty travel-stained state of our clothes and the gipsy tint on our faces, so left Siniai without availing ourselves of the privilege. We had begun the day's exertions at 3.30 in the morning, and reaching Krönstadt at five o'clock, we packed up our goods and set out for a night journey to Torda, having struck out several intervening names on our programme; for somehow the days had slipped away, and we were behind time, and the date of our journey to England was irrevocably fixed. The night was far too hot to allow of sleep, and we arrived at Torda tired, and, I admit, as cross as we have ever been in our lives.

There were salt-mines to be visited and several E.M.K.E. gentlemen kindly presented themselves as cicerones; what they thought of us I don't like to think. If they turned their heads, or stopped talking for a few moments, we had dropped asleep by the time they again looked at us. I have a hazy recollection that we were dressed up in holland, with red caps, and sat on a trolly with torches in our

hands, and that a door was opened in the hillside, and that we were pushed along tram-lines by workmen down a dank, cold tunnel, until we seemed to be in the centre of the earth, and saw large caves and heard wonderful echoes; and that when we once more emerged from the hillside into the sunlight of the upper world, the air seemed too chokingly hot to bear. One of the E.M.K.E. gentlemen was dreadfully distressed by the mahogany tint of our complexions, which he attributed to the wearing of Tam o' Shanter's, and he begged to be allowed to send some straw hats to the hotel for us to select from. We were dining in the courtyard, if I remember rightly, when the hats arrived, personally conducted by the gentleman and a few friends, not to mention a following of street boys. All the waiters assembled to assist in the choice, and Miranda says what followed only shows what you can come to when you are too sleepy to resist. The hats were made of rushes by the prisoners of Torda, and use rather than beauty had been the end the manufacturers had in view. All were put on to our heads in turn, and there being no glass the crowd voted on the effect. We forbore, with true delicacy, to look at one another, and were handed into our carriage

by those very courteous people, and drove from the town of Torda wearing two ungarnished top hats of solid white straw.

The memories of our carriage tour were so keen within us, that we felt that any other form of travelling would pall, and decided to adopt the same means for reaching Maros Ujvar, the most famous salt mine in Hungary. Travelling can never be monotonous in a country where every district is the outcome of different influences, but it can be humiliating, and we were puzzled at every turn to account for things that a little more knowledge would have cleared up at once. Thus, waking suddenly one night, after a long sleep in the moonlight, as the carriage pulled up in Toroczkó, we seemed to be in a Hungarian village where all the roofs had gone mad, and become fantastic and gabled. We lodged among peasants, but the women wore black dresses and white head cloths, and almost looked like nuns, and their house was quite luxurious and full of chromograph art. Even their red boots were odd, for the toes curled up like an Eastern shoe. Next morning the Unitarian minister (who owed his English to Manchester New College) was able to solve the mystery by explain-

ing that the people were of German origin, having been originally imported to work the mines, and as for the boots, they were of a fashion that had probably strayed from the Balkans. But what an imagination one must have had to have divined all that. He told us with gentle regret that we had just missed a grand sight, at which we mentally added another to the long list of village fêtes which we had "just missed" everywhere. Not so, but six hundred Unitarian ministers collected together for conference. We could hardly restrain a broad smile of pleasure at our luck in missing this sight, morally grand, perhaps, but worth as much to artists as a swarm of black beetles. We were now in the districts of mineral treasure, and had we cared to, might have visited endless mines, but we concentrated our remaining energies on the salt-mines of Maros Ujvar. This time, instead of being run along a tunnel on a ridiculous car, we were let down an enormous depth in a lift, carrying naphtha lamps in our hands. A passage lined with pine trunks led to a gallery overlooking a vast cavernous hall, where miners, looking the size of mice, were at work on the floor. Electric lights cast cold shimmers at intervals and threw ghastly

shadows about the grey roof. The salt is being carved out of a mountain that contains a solid workable area of 1,000 by 600 metres, and has already been worked 100 years. The hall itself was begun in 1870, and the idea is to carve a great cathedral in the salt. It is already 250 metres long and 85 broad, and is crossed by four shafts. They are now working downwards, and although it was giddy work to look from the gallery to the floor, they are only engaged on the capitals of what are to be gigantic pillars. It was an impressive and an awful sight, such as Milton could not have improved upon as the scene for an infernal parliament. A hammer sounded out while we were in the gallery, and we reached the floor in time to see the men assemble for prayers in the centre, round a table, on which a naphtha lamp flared. One miner advanced a few feet before his comrades, and half said, half chanted a long prayer. A response went echoing round in the shadowy spaces, then the men again stripped to the waist and dispersed to their work. Eight hundred of them were at work in this hall, and each one had a monogram of his own, which he scratched on a block of salt when he had cut it out, as at the end of the day they receive five kreutzers

for every block weighing fifty kilos. At one end of the hall was a raised platform of wood railed round, where concerts and dances are given to the men and their women folk. One would imagine the scene to be a mournful one at best—a merry-making of lost souls banished from the upper world. All the hours we were down in the earth my mind ran on the hopelessness of stretching words to the necessities of the case, and I decided I couldn't do it. To any one interested in salt or geology the scene would appeal; to me, who am utterly ignorant of either, it was one of hellish majesty.

Once up again in the sunlight a treat awaited us, for a gentleman, again of the E.M.K.E. persuasion, had called out the village ballet master and his troop of youths to dance the Transylvanian national dance, the "Kaluger." The ballet master stood in the centre and set the example to the rest, who danced around him in bold, neat steps, with a cat-like grace. Now and again traces of the csárdás seemed to appear in the dance, but the wild music and abandon of gesture were absent. They leapt high and performed perfect feats of agility, but every pose was regulated and had its time and place. A considerable crowd of villagers came

round to applaud. The women presented a ludicrous appearance, and yet at the same time reminded us of Japanese; for in this village the faces were flat and broad, and they wore on either side of their heads monstrous plaits of horse hair twisted



MAROS UJVAR.

into a circle, which gave them a top-heavy look, and dwarfed their already small bodies.

Maros Ujvar was the last place we visited as semi-public characters. Our minds refused to receive more impressions and our faculties were jaded. We had been reducing our nights to a matter of five hours, and one or two that had been skipped, had never

been retrieved. We had been engaged in terrible conflicts with the difficulties of language, and in spite of mountain air and Magyar food we cried "We can no more." So we took train to Branyicska, where lived Baroness Jósika, Count Esterházy's married daughter, who had invited us to visit her château, and although we had never seen her, we felt as if we were going home. The Count's forethought had preceded us all along our path, every day had brought fresh witnesses of his kindness, so that we had come to look upon him as some story-book father, and felt that any member of his family must be sympathetic. Now that I look back on Branyicska and the kind hearts of its inmates, it seems to be hundreds of miles nearer home than many an English household. It is difficult to believe that five days of hard travelling would scarcely bring me there, when I feel I have but to stretch out my arm to receive a warm hand-shake from a fair hand.

CHAPTER XIX.

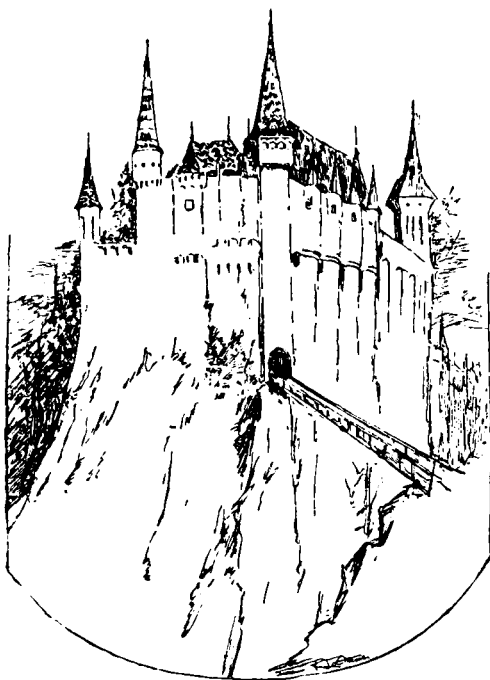
BRANYICKSKA.

THE ladies of Branyicska stood upon the steps of the château to welcome us as we drove up with Baron Jósika, who had greeted us at the station with an English sentence. We had decided to cut all further connection with those straw top hats, and leave them under the seat in the train. If there had been any room for embarrassment in our warm and affectionate reception, we should have felt it on seeing those atrocious straw objects arrive simultaneously with ourselves in the hands of an over-zealous valet, who had discovered their hiding-place. But there were no angles about that meeting. Countess Esterházy and her daughters, Baroness Jósika and Countess Anna vied with each other in making us feel at home. When we got to our room, we saw that they had read our inmost thoughts. A profusion of baths and water cans were spread about the floor, and maid-servants were

already extricating our stained, tumbled frocks from our luggage, that they might carry them off to the laundry and make it possible for us to do ourselves justice in the matter of cleanliness next day. We spent five or six wholly delightful days at Branyicka. How far life at the château was typical I am not prepared to say, but I am inclined to think that the beautiful family relationships and affection we found there were a little out of the common, unless Transylvania has higher standards than other countries. Three generations were living together within its walls—a very usual thing in Hungarian families. The old Baron, the grandfather, who had his own suite of rooms and servants, joined the family of an evening or at meal-time, and diffused an atmosphere of old-world courtesy, and a good deal of wit and gaiety, and received in return a very gentle deference from the younger members of the household. Three little children, under the care of an old family nurse of comfortable build, seemed to lead a semi-nomadic existence through the sunny days. Ever so early in the morning they were to be seen encamped in the garden, changing their quarters through the day as the shade shifted. When we appeared of a morning, the little ones ran

up and saluted us with a kiss on the hand. At meal-times they were established with their nurse at a little table in the corner of the dining-room, and so quiet and prettily-mannered were they, that only the occasional click of a spoon or a murmur of satisfaction betrayed their presence. It was the Baroness herself who gave the tone to everything around her. Tall and beautiful, with that sensitive type of beauty that only belongs to the daughters of an ancient race, and seems to trace around itself a mystic circle of high traditions, she would dance and sing, and throw herself into any amusement with the gayest; but in the midst of it all she seemed to be on the alert for the wants and comforts of others. Like many Hungarian women, she keenly responded to all innocent forms of pleasure, and was at the same time devoted to duty and full of a very real goodness. Branyicska, of which parts were very old, stood close to the banks of the Maros, which ran broad, deep, and swift. Wooded hills rose from the opposite shore, and around the château lay woods and gardens. Barefooted peasants seemed to be always at work on the grounds, sweeping the paths, running to and from the stables, or driving buffaloes down to the water. With, I hope, a par-

donable curiosity, I tried one day to discover where the house servants ended and the out-door ones began, or where the out-door ones became merely peasants who had strayed from the village, but quite



failed to find my way among the large and apparently vague staff of a Hungarian household.

Baron Jósika had planned something for our amusement each day. Sometimes we went to dine

in neighbouring châteaux; once an enormous distance to the foot of a mountain, where we exchanged carriages for carts drawn by oxen, and toiled up its sides to visit a gold mine; and once to by far the most interesting building we saw in all Hungary—the castle of Vajda-Hunyad. We had seen other ruins and buildings that breathed of mediævalism or witnessed to some special fashion in architecture, but here was one at last that seemed to express the Hungarian people, that stood out upon the hillside an embodiment of the unique flavour of Hungarian chivalry. From the fifteenth century onwards it had suffered modifications from the hand of each succeeding general, had incorporated the successive architectural phases of both east and west, and yet had finally obtained a most striking harmony and symmetry and an absolute individuality.

It is hardly necessary to say that the ladies of Branyicska were cultivated. The memory of Countess Anna, in particular, was a storehouse of poetry, and one evening she innocently put me to great embarrassment by asking me to write a typical English verse in her album. I consented, and sat down confidently, pen in hand; but the moment I tried to select one from the many touch-

ing and appropriate fragments with which I believed my mind to be stored, they became foggy and eluded me, all except one verse, which persisted in occupying the foreground of my mind :—

“It was a summer evening,
Old Caspar’s work was done,” etc.

My whole nature rose against recording this as a national specimen, and I asked to be allowed to defer writing till the morning. I got into bed in an abject state of mind, and for the better part of the night wrestled with my memory and endeavoured to throw old Caspar. I mention this trifle as a warning to all intending travellers in a romantic country, to provide themselves with a little pocket book of lines likely to prove suitable. Ever since that terrible night, ever since the shameful hour next morning when I patched together some disconnected scraps and signed them with an illustrious name, I have vowed never to travel without such a book.

The last day of our stay was the old Baron’s name day (the “name day” is celebrated in Hungary in place of the birthday), and was the occasion of a great fête. Branyicska was always “Liberty Hall.”

You might wake when you pleased in the morning, and come out into the cool verandah, where a perpetual breakfast of fruit and rolls was spread on little tables. Each new-comer was followed by a fresh little pot of tea or coffee, and no one hour seemed to be considered more appropriate at which to begin the day than another. In this delightful state of things there was no possibility of being late and consequently rude, and the conscious virtue of early risers lost its point. But this morning every one was early. Even the old Baron appeared in the garden before nine o'clock. The children had been lying in wait for him, and the moment they caught sight of him they advanced with bouquets and recited little poems in his honour. A carriage had been despatched to a neighbouring village to fetch a priest, and as soon as the old Baron joined us we adjourned to the chapel, where mass was celebrated. All the magnates from the country side arrived in the course of the morning, and by two o'clock the company was assembled and ready to sit down to a banquet which was spread beneath broad trees. The spot selected was some distance from the château, just where the Maros could be seen glittering through the tree trunks. I could not help

wondering how the dishes would be successfully brought to and fro from the kitchens. The arrangements were a triumph. Servants ran backwards and forwards as hard as they could go, handing things to the footmen, who assumed a dignified and leisurely demeanour. I got immensely interested in one Wallack youth, who as early as the soup course mistook his cue, and came dashing up with a tray of melons, and this mistake he repeated a dozen times, being waved back with difficulty. Toasts came with dessert, and speeches were made in French, German, and English, and, I believe, very generally understood. One white-haired old man concluded his speech, which had referred to England, by a touching appeal to us to tell the truth in our country about what we had seen on our travels, and if we could consistently do so, to assure our friends in England that Hungary was not entirely peopled with a savage and ignorant race. The feast lingered far on into the afternoon. Then the whole party went down to the water's edge, and some of the number got into a gigantic barge that lay waiting there. Slovak peasants navigated it from the bows, and we glided smoothly down the Maros, just as the sun was sinking behind the hills.

Nothing seemed wanting to complete the scene, save music. Several of the company wished for the Tziganes; then Countess Esterházy looked very roguish, and produced from the depths of her pocket a little tin flute that we had learned to know well. Many years ago, her husband had brought it home as a jest, saying that she might play to her children, and she delighted to show how she had pressed it into her service and contrived to play anything upon it. "My instrument," she always called it, "that shows the triumph of genius over material." She would draw it quietly from her pocket, a humorous twinkle in her eye, and suddenly accompany some serious piano solo with the utmost gravity. On this occasion its primitive little notes floated out over the water and inspired an old professor to sing so lustily that they gave us quite a concert between them.

We returned to the château as twilight fell, and at that moment fireworks blazed up from the dusky gardens, and a wandering band of gipsies scenting festivities drew near with their violins. The guests had gone that they might arrive at their homes before midnight, and only the house party remained on the verandah. At the sound of the *csárdás* the

old Baron uprose, and beckoning Countess Esterházy to join him, they went through the quiet old-world movements of the dance together, as the ball-room saw it thirty years ago, with a grace and an exquisite finish that were a revelation of a lost art. When it was over the Baron turned to us,—“Now when you go back to England, you can tell how an old man of eighty danced the Magyar csárdás with the best of them.”

With what regret we left Branyicska may be well imagined; but we took with us the memory of five flawless days and of some of the kindest hearts we had met. We broke the journey home at Buda-Pest, that we might have time to thank several of the many friends who had helped to give us such pleasant days. The President was there, in sound health again, and Julian with his *fiancée*, soon to be his bride, so that we could join congratulations with thanks; and last, but not least, Count Esterházy himself, who had been absent in Vienna while we were at Branyicska. His kindness continued to the end, and brought him to the station to see that our tickets were right and to bid us farewell. As we turned our faces homewards, to work and to autumn fogs, the feeling grew strong within us, that one

summer we must go back to hospitable Hungary,
where the hearts of the people are as warm as the
sunshine, and cry once more,

“ÉLJEN Á MAGYAR.”

