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HUNGARY UNDER KING MATTHIAS HUNYADY, SURNAMED 'CORVINUS.'

1458—1490.

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(*Read* December 1882.)

THE Roman province, Pannonia, after having become a prey to the Vizigoths and Ostrogoths, was suddenly invaded towards the end of the fourth century, A.D., by an Asiatic people known under the name of 'Huns,' 'Konoi,' 'Aorsoi,' or 'Alans.' These Huns were followed by the Avars, undoubtedly a cognate tribe. The Avars are said to have overcome the Kutugurs, or Usurgurs, and driven from Pannonia the Longobards (Lombards), a Teuton tribe, which settled in Italy, and formed the principal ethnical element of Tuscany. At last we have the Magyars, another cognate tribe of the Huns occupying Pannonia. That the Magyars were Fins was often asserted, but is now an entirely exploded hypothesis. There are a few Finnish words in the Magyar language, proving that at a certain historical period the Magyars must have had some kind of connection with the Fins, but the test words proving the affinity of languages are entirely different.

The verb of self-conscious existence is the verb '*to be*'—

Sansk. . .	asmi, asi, asti.	*Old Scl.* .	yesme, yesi, yesto.
Lithuan .	esmi, esi, esti.	*Latin* . .	sum, es, est.
Zend . .	ahmi, ahi, asti.	*Gothic* . .	im, is, ist.
Greek (Doric)	emmi, essi, esti.	*Armenian* .	em, es, ê.

Hungarian: VAGYOK, VAGY, VAN,

which in Finnish sounds: minâ olen, Sina olet, ha on, sä on. We will take next some words of social relation. Father in Hungarian is 'atya,' in Finnish *tsanta*; 'anya,' mother in Hungarian—*aiti* Finnish; 'Isten' is the Hungarian for 'God'—

'*Inmala*' the Finnish; there is certainly no resemblance in these words. As to the numerals, one, two, and four might be of one and the same lingual root, but the other numerals are quite different.

Hungarian	*Finnish*	*Hungarian*	*Finnish*
1. Egy	Yksi	6. hat	kunsi
2. kettö (Két)	kaksi	7. hét	säitsemän
3. háiom	kolme	8. nyolcz	kahrektan
4. négy	nelyä	9. kilencz	yhrektan
5. öt	wrisi	10. tiz	kymmenà.

The Magyars are lingually certainly not related to the Fins. Ethnically, they do belong with the Fins to the great Turanian group of Humanity, and must have played once a considerable part in unknown and pre-historic times in Central Asia, and those who have been mentioned by ancient Greek, Egyptian, and Persian writers, as Skythians, might have been these nomads, who lived on horseback, roamed about, and yet must have possessed a high degree of civilisation, as their language proves. This language has gone through all the phases of development: the monosyllabic, agglutinative, and the flexible, and is capable of expressing any concrete or abstract notion without using a foreign word. Were I to assume the philological subdivision of languages into analytical, organic, and synthetical, as has been done by A. W. Schlegel, I could not class the Magyar as specially belonging to any of these groups, but as being an admirable compound of all the three categories. The celebrated Professor Horváth, of the University of Pest, told his students that the language spoken by the Creator in Paradise was the Magyar. He clearly proved this to his own and his enthusiastic students' satisfaction by the name of the first man, 'Adam,' which he stated to have been the imperfect of the verb 'adni'—'adám,' I gave; reminding the first man of having received life from the Creator. I will not exactly hold this theory, but it is undoubtedly as good as that of the celebrated Reuchlin, who most earnestly and learnedly proved that God and His angels had spoken Hebrew, as the most sacred language of all

others. Having studied comparative philology and mythology, without which studies true history in a higher sense of the word, according to our modern notions, is utterly useless, I must say that the Magyar language in its isolation, development, power and refinement, stands out as mysteriously as the Egyptian Sphinx. We may try to explain its origin or its affinity, but we can as little find out its true position in the progressive philological development of humanity as the real symbol of the Sphinx. The Magyar is undoubtedly one of the very oldest languages that survived incredible historical vicissitudes, and still forms the means of expressing sensations, thoughts, political as well as social, poetical as well as historical ideas, in a comparatively small number of individuals, and yet lingual and national vitality are so great in them that neither their independent existence, nor their original language could ever be effaced. The Magyar political development had the greatest possible analogy with that of England.

The 'Magna Charta' was agreed to in England in 1215, and only seven years later (1222) the 'Bulla Aurea' was granted by, or rather extorted from, King Andreas. England's lords and barons gave privileges and liberties to church and clergy, feudal knights, vassals and tenants, to cities, towns, and boroughs, and encouraged trade; whilst the Magyar aristocracy insisted on exceptional privileges for the nobles, and laid the foundation of later dissensions which disturbed the national and political balance of the realm, and made the country a prey to continuous intrigues, carried on by foreign rulers, the Pope, the Greek and German Emperors, the Kings of Bohemia and Poland, the Turkish Sultans and Grand Vizirs; and nothing saved the Magyars, throughout all these sanguinary struggles, but their innate spirit of independence, well balanced by an equally innate sense of justice and love of higher intellectual culture. To draw in sharp outlines one of the most stirring periods of Hungarian history will be the aim of my paper. Having consulted and studied the best possible authorities on Hungary,[1] the originality of my paper

[1] Verböczi, Thurócz, Katona, Szilágy, Mailáth, Pejaczevics, Brankevitch, Fessler, &c.

will consist in the arrangement of facts, and in the general conclusions drawn from them.

Without exaggeration I may state that Hungary in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries stood at the head of the mighty, partly political, partly religious movement, which changed the whole inner life of Europe. The Magyars, though the Crusaders made Hungary a high-road for their religious enterprises in the East, never took a real interest in these fanatical expeditions which were to increase the papal authority. The Magyars at that period of their national existence had shown themselves far superior to any narrow-minded bigotry or contemptible intolerance. They came as generous conquerors in comparatively small numbers, and proved themselves kind masters to the innumerable national remnants which formed the population of Hungary. Under Stephen I., in 800, the Magyars were Romanised. Since that time the popes continually attempted to have the supremacy over kings and lords, bishoprics, monasteries, and the whole ecclesiastical organisation in Hungary; yet they never could master the politically independent spirit of the Magyars. Patriotism with them was always a higher, and morally far more inspiring, force than sectarian animosity—Mahometans, Roman Catholics, or Greeks were the same to them so long as they did their sacred duty to the nation in defending the country against foreign foes, and in no other people can we trace so determined a resolution to place political exigencies above any other consideration.

Venetians, Dalmatians, Bulgarians, Serbes, Wallachs, Slovacs, Croats, Turks, Moravians, Poles, Bohemians, Austrians, Italians, Germans, Lithuanians, red and white Russians, were distracting Hungary with petty-national and family quarrels, when Albert V. died. Ladislas, who was born after his father's death, was called on that account Posthumus, and ought to have ascended the throne, but the Poles, helped by the Sclavons, wished Ladislas to be crowned at once king of Hungary. Dissensions and intrigues increased, when a simple Hungarian nobleman, Hunyady János, a man of great talent,

determined will, and unbounded patriotism, was made governor of Hungary during the minority of Ladislas, and entrusted with the defence of the country. It was on the 28th of May, 1453 (429 years ago), that Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks under their young and valiant Padishah, Mahomet II. On the frontiers of Asia, at the entrance gates of Europe, a barrier of religious dissension was established, shutting out northern Asia from the influences of west European civilisation.

Germany had no influence at that period on the destinies of Europe. The popes lost all their power in the East, and had to yield to the Mahometan force which, in a good Christian sense of mutual love, they preferred to the sway of the Greek Church. The whole of the Continent was a body without a head, or rather, with too many heads—a kind of senseless republic in which electors, kings, dukes, counts, barons, and nobles were the citizens, who obeyed no laws, and had no common object but the advancement of their own petty family interests. The encroachment of the Turks on European territory was a great danger to Hungary, yet a greater danger threatened to disturb the agitated plains of Pannonia. A fanatic monk, small and lean, thin-faced, and hooked-nosed, threatened, like Peter the Hermit four hundred years before, to excite the people to a revival of the crusades. The fanatic monk was Capistran, who after having excited the people in Moravia to murder the Jews, and some of the wealthier fanatics to burn their trinkets, jewels, and superfluous fashionable garments, appeared at Vienna. Whenever and wherever he preached, he was surrounded by an idle, beggarly crowd. Idleness and beggary are dangerous factors in the historical evolution of humanity, yet though the people listened to him with immense delight, and admired his thundering phrases against infidels, they did not feel inclined to leave their homes and to fight the pope's battles. Capistran left Austria, and proceeded to Hungary. Here he succeeded in persuading a few thousand discontented peasants, who preferred adventure to steady work for their landlords, to join him and

to proceed with him to the gates of Belgrade, where Hunyady stood to repel the progress of a similarly fanatic herd of believers, though of a different creed. Capistran's army had no proper weapons. Only a few of his men were provided with pikes, scythes, sickles, whilst others had flails and pitchforks, but they all had a grievance, which they intended to revenge on the infidels. Hunyady, with these motley auxiliaries, and his own well-drilled and well-armed troops, repelled the furious onslaught of the Turks; yet he did not dare to attack the entrenched enemy. But Capistran—a cross in his hand—led the infuriated mob against the first and second entrenchments with such violence, that the Turks began to yield. Hunyady saw the advantage and, in the right moment, brought up his cavalry, fell upon the rear of the confused enemy, and the Turks were completely routed. Mahomet II. had been wounded, and fled with the remains of his army, leaving rich booty in the hands of his conquerors. The aggressive force of the Turks was for a long time checked. Hunyady a fortnight after this victory died in the arms of Capistran of the plague which broke out in the camp, and Capistran soon after shared the fate of his valorous and heroic friend.

Ashamed of their inactivity, and envious of the laurels which Hunyady János and a begging monk had earned on the battle-fields near Belgrade, King Ladislas and Count Ulrick of Cilly (Cilley), were now determined to proceed with an army of crusaders collected in Germany, Bohemia, Austria and Hungary, to take the fortress of Belgrade within a fixed period. Court intrigues prevented the appointment of Ladislas Hunyady, the young valiant and promising son of Hunyady János, as commander of the national troops, and his uncle the diplomatically better trained Count Cilly was placed at the head of the army. Ladislas Hunyady resolved to have his revenge on Count Cilly. Whilst the king and his adviser were delaying their arrival before Belgrade, the valiant son of the greatest captain, Hungary ever produced, took Belgrade by storm, and succeeded in persuading the young king and his advisers to come into the fortress with a

small retinue. Count Cilly felt uneasy, could not sleep the whole night, and lay listening to the monotonous sounds of the steps of Ladislas Hunyady's soldiers, and the plaintive call of the horns of the distant guards. Cilly knew well that his hour had come. He had been the evil genius of the young king, who was brought up in strict moral principles, which were laughed at by Cilly as 'Styrian notions,' of which he promised to purify the king, and to show him the world and its real delights. 'A kind of Mephistopheles in the flesh, Cilly had long ago planned the destruction of Ladislas Hunyady, and his younger brother, Matthias. He wrote to his father-in-law, George Brankovics,[1] 'he would send him two balls as no ruler of Servia ever possessed to play with,' and in the circle of his friends he often boasted that he would destroy before the end of the year the two outgrowths of 'a foreign, a Wallachian, currish race.' Ladislas Hunyady, well informed of the sentiments of his uncle, did but protect his own life from the attacks of a determined assassin. When the king and Cilly were safe in Belgrade, the next morning after early mass, Ladislas Hunyady sent for Cilly to meet him in conference. Cilly came and found only two other gentlemen present. Ladislas reproached his haughty relation with his treacherous conduct, and insulted him to such a degree that the Count at last lost his temper, drew his sword, aimed a blow at Ladislas—this was the pre-arranged sign—for at that moment the hidden attendants of Ladislas rushed into the room, and attacked the enraged Count, who was soon overpowered and his head severed from his body. The terrible tragedy did not end here. The king, one-sidedly informed by his courtiers of this incident, hesitated to follow up the great victory, obtained over the Turks by Ladislas Hunyady, and lost to the Christians all the advantages that had been gained with the sacrifice of many a precious life. Egotism and jealousy, mean ambition and personal vanity, played in the destinies of whole nations often

[1] See 'Hist. MS. rerum Austriæ ab anno 1454 ad ann. 1467 auctoris coævi,' ap. Pray, *Ann.* P. III. p. 158.

a far greater part than honesty of purpose and straightforwardness of character. The king suppressed his resentments, and instead of taking the threatened interests of Christianity to heart, withdrew with his adherents to Temesvàr, the strong fortified possession of the Hunyadys; and, advised by Count Ladislas Gara, a cousin of Ladislas Hunyady, he arranged a feast of reconciliation on St. Clement's Day, November 25, 1456. After a solemn mass, the king embraced the two Hunyadys (Ladislas and Matthias), placed his hands on the Gospel, and swore by God and all His saints to forgive Ladislas, that his heart was free from all hostile feelings, and that he would under no condition, and at no time, revenge the murder of Count Cilly. He further declared Eliza, the widow of Hunyady János, to be henceforth his mother, and her sons his brothers.[1] He then led the two brothers to the altar, and shared with them the Holy Sacrament, to confirm his solemn oath. Yet four months later Ladislas and Matthias were arrested at Vienna; the first was taken to Buda, where he was executed after sunset, not to allow the daylight to shine on the dastardly deed. How closely all the striking phenomena of history follow the strict law of causation. Treachery engendered revenge; revenge, perjury and new treachery. Oaths were sworn and broken on all sides. One perjurer did not feel himself bound to keep faith with another perjurer.

King Ladislas Posthumus died the year after, on St. Clement's Day, the anniversary on which he swore forgiveness and brotherhood to Ladislas Hunyady.

The sympathy which the execution of young Ladislas Hunyady created, and the contemptible treachery of his adversaries, placed his younger brother on the throne, at the same time that George Podiebrad was elected king of Bohemia (1458). The surname 'Corvinus' was taken by Matthias from Corvus (a raven), which, with a ring in its beak, formed the family crest of the Hunyadys. Matthias was but a boy of fourteen years when his brother was executed. He himself was led about as a hostage, and ordered from Vienna to

[1] See Thurócz, Chroni. P. IV. ch. 59, 60.

Prague, where he arrived on the day of the death of Ladislas Posthumus, and where he was kept by George Podiebrad as a State prisoner. His uncle, Count Szilágy, was anxious to see his nephew on the Hungarian throne. The free-thinking and pious bishop, John Vitéz, was sent with 40,000 ducats to Prague to negotiate with Podiebrad the release of Matthias, which was granted for the above-mentioned sum. Szilágy in the meantime collected 40,000 men, and with their help Matthias was by unanimous acclamation elected king of Hungary (1458). When Æneas Sylvius, the learned chronicler of that period, expresses his surprise 'that Hungary and Bohemia should have become transferred from the most influential princely houses to those of common noblemen,' he only proves what so many chroniclers of our own days do, that he did not understand the *spirit* of his time.

Hunyady Mátyás had at once to struggle with the emperor of Germany, Frederick III., who was also chosen king of Hungary by a party hostile to the people. The emperor, in the possession of the crown of St. Stephen, had himself crowned king of Hungary at Wiener Neustadt, on Austrian territory. The pope, Pius II., thought to find in the excitable and youthful Matthias a better tool against the Turks than in Frederick, therefore openly took the part of Corvinus. Frederick and Podiebrad met unexpectedly at Brünn (1459), and concluded an offensive and defensive alliance for the conquest of Hungary. The spirited Hungarian king, however, soon put an end to these plans. He married the beautiful daughter of King Podiebrad, and Frederick seeing himself suddenly deprived of one of his most influential allies, consented to make a good bargain. Matthias was to be recognised by him king of Hungary for life, and Frederick III. gave up the crown of St. Stephen, on payment of 80,000 ducats (about 40,000*l.*), but he at the same time demanded that the Hungarian royal title should be granted to the Habsburgs, which stipulation forms the foundation of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Matthias turned against the rebellious Wallachs (1462),

took the fortress of Jaicza, in Bosnia (1464), hurled back the conquering Turks, and was crowned king of Hungary at Stuhlweissenburg (Fehérvár) with the crown of St. Stephen (1464). The bigoted French king, Louis XI., and the kings of Bohemia and Poland tried to induce Matthias to enter with them into a league against the Turks, the enemies of Christendom. Matthias having experienced the loving disinterestedness of his Christian allies, for which he had to pay so many ducats, did not see the necessity of establishing a general European Confederation of States against the Turks.

Matthias was of an essentially practical mind. He refused to support the plans of Pope Pius II., and to form a crusade against the Turks, or to help the holy father in his endeavours to have King Podiebrad brought to trial for heresy at Rome; or to extirpate the Hussites—tasks which appeared to the pope even more important than the subjection of the Turks. On the contrary, Matthias was ready to ally himself with the kings of Poland and Bohemia, if they would assist him to put down the thieving and murdering bands of highway robbers and beggars in Moravia and Hungary; but the Hungarian king was left single-handed, and succeeded in extirpating the Sclavon robbers and beggars. Having put down a rebellion in Transylvania, he directed all his efforts against the eternally wavering, undecided king of Bohemia, whom he drove out of Moravia, and with whom he concluded peace at last. The Catholic league, with the pope at their head, made every possible effort to prevent a union between Podiebrad and Matthias; they proclaimed the latter king of Bohemia, had him crowned with great pomp at Olmütz, and gave him Silesia. The dominion of the Hungarian crown extended from Servia to Silesia, and everywhere the determined will and genius of the king fostered order, without preventing the awakened spirit of inquiry to take its free course. The Utraquists at that period were undoubtedly the forerunners of the Lutherans and Calvinists, and Matthias, instead of persecuting them, allowed them free profession of their religious notions, and used his best efforts with the papal court to establish on

the basis of mutual toleration peace, already concluded with Podiebrad, king of Bohemia, and Wenzeslas, king of Poland.

In 1485 Matthias Hunyady stood at the height of his power. He restrained the sway of the Turks, possessed and governed Moravia, Silesia, and Lower Austria, held his court at Vienna, kept Frederick of Germany in awe, and showed himself even a greater ruler in time of peace than in time of war He devoted his principal energy to an improvement of all the branches of public administration; he altered the land laws, invited foreign settlers, permitted the peasants freely to change their residences; he invited even the nobles to promote agriculture, and worked in that direction with unsurpassed energy, to show the people what the life of a landowner ought to be, and that 'the peasants ought to be treated with kindness, being of the same blood and flesh as any higher-born creatures!' From agriculture he turned his attention to the rich gold, silver, copper, tin, and lead mines in Hungary, and granted to anyone who undertook to work them favourable concessions. Next he encouraged industry in the towns of Hungary and Transylvania, and gave laws to the different guilds, to raise in them a feeling of common interests. Watchmakers were specially protected. Leutschau, twenty-six years after his death, had the first clock-tower in the whole of Hungary. Foreign commerce was not neglected. At Buda, Pesth, Oldenburg, Pressburg, &c., important firms were established, who traded with Venice, Florence, Frankfort, Nuremberg, Breslau, and Cracovia. He regulated taxes and duties according to the wealth of the landowners, and submitted churches and monasteries to an equally just contribution to the burdens of the State.

Simple in his every-day mode of living, he was the wealthiest prince of his times. When he met the Polish king, Wenzeslas, 'neither Homer's Alkinous nor the Lydian King Krœsus' could have wished for more pomp shown in carpets, gold and silver vessels, and goblets ornamented with precious stones. Dinner was served to the kings and their retinue on the public market-place. The central royal table

was surrounded by ten other tables, and at all of them people eat on silver, and drank from golden goblets.

The papal legate, Bishop Castella, saw in the royal residence of the king at Buda so many dresses embroidered with gold or silver, adorned with precious stones and pearls, carpets, curtains, of the most costly weavings, artistically worked, golden and silver caskets, trinkets, chains, that fifty large waggons could not have taken the treasures away. As much as Corvinus was eager to show his love for pomp and eastern grandeur, as little did he neglect the culture of arts and sciences.

Italy stood at that period at the head of the newly revived poetical and artistic movement, and King Matthias invited foreign architects, stone-cutters, musicians, singers, and actors to settle down in Hungary. To satisfy his own taste he engaged sculptors and painters, and employed pupils of Nicola Alunno, Pietro Perugino, from Rome; Florence furnished him distinguished artists from the studios of Andrea di Castagno and Luca Signorello; Bologna and Naples sent him students from the schools of Lippo Dalmasi and Antonio Solario. At the head of them stood his court painter—a pupil of Masaccio, the Carmelite monk, Fra Filippo Lippi, who was scarcely surpassed by any other painter in sweetness of forms and a deep glow of colouring. Of the greatest value was the grand library which Matthias collected in his palace at Buda. It was as rich in MSS. as in newly printed books. There were Greek, Syriac, Arabic, and Hebrew MSS.—generally bought from fugitive Greeks, when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks. Corvinus had everywhere agents who had orders to buy whatever was good and worth possessing. His library consisted of 55,000 volumes, partly splendidly written MSS. and partly printed books. This effort to collect MSS. and books was the more praiseworthy in the Hungarian king, as the art of printing had only been invented 44 years before he began to establish his unequalled library (1466).

The year before (1465) he renewed the charter of the

University of Buda, obtained a Bull from Pope Paul II. to establish a chair of Theology at the University of Fünfkirchen, and endowed the University of Pressburg with all the rights and privileges of the University of Bologna. He was most anxious to see the University of Buda becoming a real centre of learning. From Italy, Franconia, and Germany he assembled the most distinguished teachers of mathematics, poetry, rhetorics, astronomy, and ordered the first regular almanac to be published.

The first printing office in Hungary was established in 1470 by the Provost and Vice-Chancellor of Buda; and the first work published, 1473 (one year *before* the first book was printed in England—'The Game of the Playe of Chesse,' by Caxton), was the 'Chronica Hungarorum,' from an unknown author. Unhappily the sudden intellectual enthusiasm kindled by the king was not kept alive, for ten years after the establishment of a printing office in Hungary, even Missals, for the use of the archbishopric of Grán, were printed at Nuremberg, and the masterly written 'Chronicles of Hungary,' by John Thurócz, were printed at the expense of a citizen of Buda, Theobaldus Fejér, at Venice, Augsburg, and Brünn.

All the noble efforts of this glorious ruler, who was far in advance of his times, were in vain. It was an artificial attempt to raise Hungary to one of the very first empires in the south-east of Europe; to make her peoples ardent pioneers of civilisation, constitutional freedom, and order along the shores of the Danube, and to form a powerful bulwark against the encroaching forces of Turkey. After the death of Matthias Corvinus ambitious party-men, like Stephen and his son John Zápolya, took the lead in Hungary, and after thirty-six years of bloodshed and rebellion, devastation and misery under King Wladislas and his son Louis II., the latter of whom fell at the battle of Mohács, betrayed by those who ought to have supported him, Hungary became, as far as Buda, a prey to the Turks, and every progress of civilisation was checked for centuries in the east of Europe.