

HUNGARIANS OF THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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English interest in Hungary and the Hungarians flowed and ebbed largely in accordance with certain political and religious movements. The rise of Ottoman power, which Byzantium and the Balkan States proved unable to resist, continued in the 16th and 17th centuries, the ultimate object of the Sublime Porte being the conquest of the Holy Roman Empire. King Louis II. of Hungary having lost his life in the fateful battle of Mohács fought in 1526 against Suleiman the Magnificent, the crown of Hungary came into the possession of Louis' brother-in-law, Ferdinand of Habsburg, who was the brother of Emperor Charles V., and was elected on the latter's demise Emperor himself. Though Hungary has never belonged in public law to the Holy Roman Empire (which — to use the words of Gibbon — was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire), the final struggle was fought out mostly on Hungarian territory. Hungary was torn into three parts: Transylvania was ruled by Hungarian, generally Protestant princes acknowledging Turkish suzerainty, the central part of Hungary proper was under direct Turkish rule, and the northwestern part was ruled by the Habsburg Kings of Hungary, more often than not in opposition to Hungarian sentiment and in violation of the laws of the country. The Hungarians had, thus, to sacrifice life and property in defence of western civilisation in a war lasting, with few interruptions, about two centuries, during which period they were compelled several times to rise against their own kings to regain their constitutional liberties and religious freedom.

The Turkish wars and the struggles of the Hungarians

could not fail to evoke interest in England, too. This was particularly the case in the 17th century, when a whole series of events tended to arouse and enliven such interest. In the Thirty Years' War the son-in-law of James I., Frederic V., elector palatine, and Count Peter Mansfeld were the allies of Gabriel Bethlen, Prince of Transylvania, leader of the Hungarian Protestants. Later England was rent by religious strife and an antidynastic revolution, followed by restoration and Tory reaction. Even the division of the Hungarians into *Labantses* (court party) and *Kurutses* (country party) bore some resemblance to Toryism and Whigism.

But to return to the 16th century, it seems strange that a son of Hungary, a land-locked country, should have been selected to have an honourable part in the first serious English attempt at colonisation in the New World; nevertheless, that is exactly what happened. Like many humanists of the age, this Hungarian also Hellenised his name; and we know him only as *Stephanus Parmenius Budaeus*, or Stephen Parmenius of Buda. He was born in Buda in the middle of the 16th century, amid Turkish surroundings, but of Christian parentage. He was a Protestant, and augmented his knowledge acquired at home by three years' study in foreign countries before arriving in England. His talents and accomplishments gained him many friends among the literati of London and Oxford. One of them, the famous Richard Hakluyt, introduced him to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who took such a liking to the young Hungarian humanist as to select him to be the historian of his second voyage to America, to record in graceful Latin the events of the enterprise and the founding of the colony.

Sir Humphrey, with his colonists, embarked on four boats and landed on August 3, 1583, in Newfoundland, of which he solemnly took possession in the name of his sovereign. Parmenius sent a Latin report to Hakluyt, which, with a Latin poem of Parmenius and an account of his death, was published in Hakluyt's great work: *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*. On the return voyage to England the two boats bearing Sir Humphrey and Parmenius, respectively, were wrecked, carrying them down to a watery grave. Captain Haie of the *Delight*, which got home safely, wrote of the death of Parmenius as follows:

"This was a heavy and grievous event, to lose at one blow our chiefe shippe fraughted with great provision, gathered together with much travell, care, long time, and difficultie. But more was the losse of our men, which perished to the number almost of hundred soules. Amongst whom was drowned a learned man, an Hungarian, borne in the citie of Buda, called thereof Budaenius, who of pietie and zeale to good attempts, adventured in this action, minding to record in the Latine tongue, the gests and things worthy of remembrance, happening in this discoverie, to the honour of our nation, the same being adorned with the eloquent stile of this Orator, and rare Poet of our time."

It is not my intention to give a full bibliography of the English books, pamphlets, etc. referring to Hungary, the Turkish wars, the siege of Buda, etc. in the 16th and 17th centuries, but shall confine myself to the selection of such items as are of special interest or, rather, deal with particular persons of note.

The first English book devoted entirely to the history of Hungary was published in London in 1600, entitled *THE HISTORIE OF THE TROVBLES OF HVNGARIE: contain- ing the pitifull Losse and Ruine of that Kingdome, and the Wares happened there, in that time, betweene the Christians and Turkes*. This is a translation by R[ooke] C[hurche] of Martin Fumée's French book, published in Paris in 1594. It is a large book, quarto size, of 356 numbered pages in addition to the dedication, introduction and an alphabetical index, and contains the history of the fifty years from the battle of Mohács (1526) to the death of Maximilian (1576). The translator, who had been "a trauailer in this Countrie of Hungarie" himself, begins his dedication with the following words characteristic of the spirit of the book: "Hungarie after many afflictions endured by her sworne enemies (the Turkes) for her vtter ruine and decay: and after as many intreaties, requests, and earnest petitions made to the Princes of Christendome, and to diuers persons of great reputation and authoritie amongst them, for the asswaging (or rather quite suppressing, if possible it could be) of these her wofull and intollerable miseries: doth now at last wander abroade, and is come into our little Iland (it beeing as it were in the vtter-

most confines of Europe) in ragged and mournfull habits as a distressed Pilgrime."

Several of the Princes of Transylvania of the 17th century have found some place in English literature. Captain John Smith, of Pocahontas fame, in writing of his exploits against the Turks in Hungary proper and Transylvania (some of which are in contradiction to well-established historical facts) claimed to have received an annuity of 300 ducats and a grant of arms from Sigismund Bathory, Prince of Transylvania, in 1603 as a reward for having killed three Turks in single combat. The grant of arms, though entered in the register of the College of Arms in London in 1625, is undoubtedly a forgery (as proved by Mr. Lewis L. Kropf, of London, in a series of articles published in volume IX of the London "Notes and Queries" and augmented in my treatise on Hungarian-American Historical Connections, Budapest, 1927.).

The party of Stephen Bocskai, Prince of Transylvania, who rose in arms against King Rudolph to get redress for the violations of Hungary's constitutional liberties and the oppression of the Protestants, issued a manifesto to the rulers of Europe, the English edition of which was published in London under the title of *A Declaration of the Lords and States of the Realm of Hungaria* in 1606.

The name of Prince Gabriel Bethlen, who — as stated above — was the ally of the son-in-law of James I. and of Count Mansfeld in the Thirty Years' War, often occurs in contemporary English literature. As a champion of religious freedom his name was somehow associated with the word Bethlehem, and he was often referred to as Bethlehem Gabor (Gabriel) or Bethlem Gabor. He is mentined in Ben Jonson's drama *Staple of News* (1625) and Shadwell's *The Lancashire Witches* (1681), also in Godwin's novel *St. Leon, a Tale of the 16th Century* (1799). Under the influence of the last-named book John Burk wrote an historical drama entitled *Bethlen Gabor, Lord of Transylvania* (1807). A serious appreciation of Gabriel Bethlen's life and acts as a statesman was published, however, only in 1740 by Samuel Richardson, who edited the papers of Sir Thomas Roe. (*The Negotiations of Sir Thomas Roe in his Embassy to the Ottoman Porte from*

the Year 1628 inclusive, containing... his correspondences... with Bethlem Gabor, Prince of Transylvania, etc.)

The successor of Gabriel Bethlen as Prince of Transylvania, George Rákóczi I., was also compelled to make an appeal to arms against the encroachments on the constitutional liberties of Hungary, and issued a manifesto setting forth the causes thereof. The said manifesto was made public in London in 1644 under the title of *The Declaration or Manifesto of George Racokzie, Prince of Transylvania, to the States and Peeres of Hungarie*, and was followed by a reply of King Ferdinand III. in the same year.

During the reign of Prince George Rákóczi II. (son of George I.) an Anglican divine, Isaac Basire, prebendary of Durham, who had to flee from England after the revolution, found refuge in Transylvania as professor at the College of Gyula-Fehérvár (Alba Julia) and became the confidential adviser of George Rákóczi II. in matters of state. After the death of the latter he returned to England and was reinstated by Charles II. His correspondence was published in London, however only in 1831.

Prince Michael Apafy also rose in arms against the oppression of the Habsburg Imperialists. He, too, issued a declaration (of 16 folio pages), which was published in parallel Latin and English columns in 1682, the title of the same reading as follows: *THE DECLARATION OF THE Hungarian War, Lately set out by the most Illustrious MICHAEL APAFY, Prince of Transylvania, Against the Emperour's S. Majesty. — According to the Transylvanian Copy, Anno 1682. — To all Kings, Princes, and Commonwealths, of the Christian World, to the Estates and Orders of the whole S. Roman Empire: Lastly, to the miserable People of Pannonia, that groan under the burthen of their Oppressions: For everlasting Memory, Michael Apafy, by the Grace of God Prince of Transylvania, Lord of (several) Parts of the Kingdom of Hungaria and Count of the Siculians, I do declare and testifie in sincere Truth and unfeigned Faith. —* The declaration contains a pathetic description of the tragedy of the Hungarian nation during the rule of the Habsburg Kings, their violations of the laws of the country and oppression of the Protestants, their policy of Germanisation

and the methods followed by them for creating division among the Hungarians, and ends with an appeal for unity in the national cause. Being reproached for accepting the help of the Turks against Christians, Apafy gives in his declaration a list of the Christian rulers — including Pope Clement IV., Francis I. of France, and Maximilian of Austria — who had turned to the Mohammedans for armed assistance against their enemies.

In 1664 there appeared in London a neat little duodecimo book, with the "imprimatur" of the Archbishop of Canterbury, entitled *The CONDUCT and CHARACTER of Count NICHOLAS SERINI, Protestant Generalissimo of the Auxiliaries in Hungary, The most Prudent and resolved Champion of Christendom. With his Parallels SCANDERBEG & TAMBERLAIN. Interwoven with the principal Passages of the Christians and Turks Discipline and Success, since the Infidels first Invasion of Europe, in the year 1313.* — The book is adorned by a medaillon picture of Serini, painted by H. D. and engraved by I. Chantry, and the unknown author signs himself O. C. This book is an appreciation of the noble character and deeds of the second Nicholas Zrinyi, surnamed in Hungary "the Poet", having been the author of "Obsidio Szigetiana", the epopeia of the self-sacrifice of his ancestor, the first Nicholas Zrinyi. To our knowledge, he was not a Protestant. The story of the first Nicholas Zrinyi and his heroic death in the defence of Szigetvár a century before is also related in the book.

Eight years later another small book, but conceived in an entirely different spirit, was published in London. The encroachments on the Hungarian constitution having continued and the imperial army having left Hungary to her fate, concentrating all its efforts on the defence of Vienna, several Hungarian patriots of high standing planned an armed uprising to force a change in the policy of the Government. The Vienna Government, having been informed of the plans, had the leaders of the so-called conspiracy, viz. Peter Zrinyi, Ban of Croatia, Francis Nádasdy, Iudex Curiae, and Cristopher Frangepán, arrested, convicted of high treason and executed in 1671. The constitution of Hungary was abolished, and the grand-master of the Order of the Teutonic Knights

was appointed Governor of the country. The execution of the patriots aroused great indignation, whereupon the Imperial Government deemed it advisable to have its own account of the happenings published. This was written in German by Matthaeus Cosmerovius, and the said little English book was translated from the German of Cosmerovius by P. A., Gent . . . The title of the book reads as follows: *THE HUNGARIAN REBELLION: OR An Historical Relation of the late wicked Practises of the three Counts, Nadasdi, Serini, and Frangepani; tending to subvert the Government of his present Imperial Majesty in Hungary, and introduce the Mahumetan. With their Arraignment, Condemnation, and manner of being Executed for the same.* — It "The Epistole to the Reader" the translator states that he wishes the book "may have its true and proper effects, on all such turbulent and Rebellious spirits here amongst us, as, being ignorant of the heavy yোক which the Subjects of most Princes and States submit to, as also insensible of the great indulgence and lenity, which we are bless'd with here, are alway murmuring and repining at the Government: I wish (I say) that this may be a warning and example to all men to keep within the bounds of their Duty and Obedience to that Royal Authority, which is set over us by God".

The adherents of the executed patriots fled mostly to Transylvania, where the banner of liberty was soon unfurled again, the leadership passing from Michael Teleki, Councillor of Prince Michael Apafy, to Emeric Thököly who received assistance both from Louis XIV and the Sultan. It was around this time that in Hungary the appellations *Kuruts* and *Labants*, and in England Whig and Tory came into existence. Thököly, the Kuruts leader, was extremely popular among the Whigs and Dissenters of England, but was furiously assailed by the Tories. His name was variously spelled in England as *Teckely*, *Tekely*, *Teckeli* and *Tekley*, and it was particularly his alliance with the Turks, which offered ground for attacks on him and his English admirers, the latter being dubbed *Teckelites*. He was certainly the most talked-about, most praised and most abused Hungarian in 17th century England.

The nickname Teckelite seems to have been invented, or, at least, brought into circulation, by Sir Roger L'Estrange, who

was "surveyor of imprimery and printing presses" under Charles II., but, after losing that job, became a journalist himself and founded the *Observer* in London in 1681 to offset the influence of the Whig press. The first article dealing with Thököly appeared in this paper in 1682, in which L'Estrange called him "the mahometan christian or the true protestant Hungarian moderator for the reconciling of both churches". The English Whigs — L'Estrange stated — and the Hungarian "malcontents" closely resembled each other; the Hungarian Dissidents asked the "brotherly assistance" of the Moham-medan Turks, their conduct being "every jot" as justified as that of the Whigs who appealed for assistance to the Christian Turks, *i. e.* the Scotch Covenanters. Several other articles were published in the same vein, and the "Hungarian Declaration" (by which was meant Apafy's manifesto) was also subjected to hostile criticism.

In my collection of English *Hungarica* there are two rare pasquinades about Thököly, printed in London in 1683 as one-leaf broadsides. The first is entitled *A Letter from Count Teckely to the Salamanca Doctor, giving an Account of the Siege of Vienna, and the State of the Ottoman Army*. A few lines quoted from this mock-letter will show its tenor. "And as a token of his love to You, and all the English Mahometans and Telekites, he will give and grant unto You the full enjoyment of Liberty of Conscience, after You have lent Your Prayers and Hands to the Extirpating of Christianity: And he doth farther assure You. That he will use his utmost Endeavours to make a perfect Unity between the two Kirks of Mahomet and Geneva; and that the Directory, and the Alcoran shall be bound up in one Volumn, and be proclaimed equally Religious and Glorious, and equally to be used by the true Protestant Mahometans and Tekelites." The other broadside is entitled *Dr. Oates's Answer to Cont Teckly's Letter, Giving Him a True Account of the Present Horrible Plot*. In this pasquill Dr. Oates assures Thököly that "If you will send Money to bear the charge of their Voyage, I do not doubt but to bring the G. S. a hundred thousand True Mahometan Protestants, that (since your Letter) I have recommended your Excellencys respects to. Nay, a great part of them are in the village of London".

Thököly made his entry into English poetry, too. John Dryden vented his spleen at him or, rather, his English friends, in the following lines:

... there were a sort of wights,
 (I think my author calls them Tekelites:),
 Such hearty rogues against the king and laws,
 They favoured e'en a foreign rebel's cause,
 When their own damned design was quashed and awed;
 At least they gave it their good abroad.
 As many a man, who, for a quiet life,
 Breeds out his bastard, not to nose his wife,
 Thus, o'er their darling plot these Trimmers cry,
 And, though they cannot keep it in their eye,
 They bind it 'prentice to Count Tekely.

Sir Walter Scott as editor of Dryden's collected works quotes, among his editorial notes, also from less known Tory poets lines referring to Thököly.

A ballad published in 1685, soon after the defeat of the Duke of Monmouth, bears the title "A Song upon the Rendezvous on Hounsley-Heath, with a Parallel of the Destruction of our English Turks in the West, and the Mahometans in Hungary."

The Rev. Alexander Tyler, who wrote *The Memoires, of the Life and Actions Of the most Invincible and Triumphant Prince* (John Sobieski, King of Poland), "done in verse" and printed in Edinburgh in 1685, got into a frenzy whenever he referred to Thököly, as may be seen from the following quotation:

Base Apostate Rebel, Count Tekly by Name,
 All Christendoms Scandal, the Protestants shame:
 To find his Imperial Land-Lord, new Work,
 Divorc'd all Religion, struck match with the Tvrk:
 Quits Cross for a Crescent; the Sun for the Moon;
 The truth for a Turbant; takes Mecha for Rome.
 Paunds his Grace, and his God, and auch glorious thing,
 For the Nick-name, and Noise of a Titular King.

The romantic love of Thököly for Ilona Zrinyi (daughter of Count Peter Zrinyi and widow of Francis Rákóczi I.), one

of the greatest heroines of Hungarian history, who defended the fortress of Munkács for three years against the blood-thirsty imperial General Caraffa, is the subject of a book, translated from the French in 1686, entitled *The Amours of Count Teckeli and the Lady Aurora Veronica de Serini*. The biography of Thököly, up to the year 1691, was published in London in 1693 under the title of *MEMOIRS of EMERIC COUNT TECKELY. In Four BOOKS. Wherein are related all the most considerable Transactions in Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, from his Birth, Anno 1656, till after the Battel of Salankement, in the Year 1691.* — This is the translation of a French book published in 1691, the authorship of which is attributed to J. Leclerc. The book contains also a medallion picture of Thököly engraved by P. Bouche.

There are many references to Thököly also in a book dealing with the reign of John Sobieski, which appeared in London in 1700, entitled *POLISH MANUSCRIPTS: or The Secret History of the Reign of John Sobieski, The III. of that Name, K. of Poland*. This is a translation of Dalerac's *Les Anecdotes de Pologne*, published in Paris in 1699.

Thököly was not entirely forgotten in England even after he had died a quiet man in exile in Turkey. A drama glorifying some of his heroic exploits was written in England as late as in 1806 and performed on the stage with such success that a second edition was printed in 1807 and a third edition in 1829. The title page of the book reads as follows: *TEKELI; or The Siege of Montgatz. A Melo Drame, in Three Acts. As performed with distinguished Success at the Theatre-Royal, Drury Lane. Written by Theodore Edward Hook, Esq. The Music by Mr. Hook, Senr.* — Theodore Edward Hook was a popular stage-author of the period, but he evidently overlooked to mention that his drama was an adaptation from the French of M. Pixérécourt performed for the first time in Paris "sur le théâtre de l'Ambigu comique le 7 nivose an XII", viz. on December 28, 1804. It was a spectacular play with much fireworks and waving of flags, but deviating in many important particulars from historic facts. Montgatz is, of course, the Frenchified name of Munkács, Ilona Zrinyi is called Alexina, and Thököly kills — as a happy ending — the General Caraffa in single combat. — y —