

MAGYAR POEMS

**SELECTED AND
TRANSLATED FROM THE HUNGARIAN**

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

**BY
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AND
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FOREWORD.

The following remarks have been contributed by the well-known traveller, Professor ARMINIUS VÁMBÉRY, C.V.O., Hon. Doctor of Budapest University, and of Trinity College, Dublin, and Professor of Oriental Languages at Budapest University : -

If the transplantation of foreign poetry into English were a matter of linguistical skill and ability alone, the achievement of Miss Nora de Vallyi and Miss Dorothy Stuart would not rank higher than many other similar translations from one language into another. But here we have before us a task of quite a different character. The Hungarians, as Orientals by extraction and Occidentals by education, have always retained in their poetry the peculiarly Oriental spirit of thought and fancy. Their poetical productions are generally arrayed in the gorgeous Oriental dress, and although sometimes foreign to the Westerner, still never fail to attract our attention and to delight our mind. Of course, the harmonising of the ideas of two different races is not an easy matter, and it is with the utmost astonishment that I have read the English version of the Magyar Poems. The translators have done full justice to the task before them, for not only is the rendering perfect and most faithful, but also the English, as far as a foreigner can judge, is faultless and flowing. Up to the present very few Hungarian poems have appeared in such a becoming and trusty garb as the collection before us, and the translators certainly deserve the credit of the English reader and the thanks of the Hungarian nation.

Á. Vámbéry.

Budapest.

The Publishers have also received the following from LOUIS FELBERMAN, Esq., Founder and Vice President of the Hungarian Society, and Author of "Hungary and Its People," "The House of Teck," etc., etc.: -

"I have read through the Poems, and I find they are admirably translated and well selected, and give a true picture of Hungarian poetry. At the same time they serve the purpose to acquaint the English reader with the picturesque scenery of Hungary, and the glorious history of the country."

KEY TO THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE HUNGARIAN NAMES.

[Note. - The principal accent should *always* be placed on the first syllable. *No* syllable should be slurred.]

Álmos	Ahl-mosh.
Arany, János	Aur-aun, Yah-nosh.
Árpád	Ahr-pahd.
Baja	Bau-yaw.
Bem	Bam.
Bendegúz	Ban-day-gooz.
Berzsenyi, Dániel	Barts-ane-ye, Dah-ni-al.
Cseke	Chack-a.
Csokonai, Mihály	Chok-on-au-i, Me-hahy.
Debreczen	Dab-retz-an.
Egyházas-Hetye	Edge-hahz-aush-Hat-ya.
Eötvös, József	Ert-versh, Yo-shafe.
Gyulai, Pál	Jew-lau-e, Pahl.
Hunyadi	Hoon-yau-de.
Jókai, Mór	Yo-kau-e, More.
Kalocsa	Kaul-outch-aw.
Kanizsa	Kaun-iz-sfiaw.
Kazinczy	Kauz-in-zee.
Kisfaludy, Károly	Kish-fau-lu-de, Kahr-oy.
Kisfaludy, Sándor	Kish-fau-lu-de, Shahn-dor.
Kiskőrös	Kish-kur-rush.
Kölcsey, Ferencz	Kirl-chay, Far-antz.
Kolozsvár	Kol-oz-vahr.
Kunság	Koon-shahg.
Ladislaus	Laud-ish-lau-oosh.
László	Lahs-lo.
Lévay, József	Lay-voy, Yo-shafe.
Magyar	Maudie-aur.
Mikes, Kelemen	Mik-ash, Kal-am-an.
Miskolcz	Mish-koltz.
Mohács	Mo-hahtch.
Nagyenyed	Naudge-an-yad.
Nagy Szalonta	Naudge Saul-on-taw.
Petőfi, Sándor	Pate-ur-fe, Shahn-dor.
Pozsony	Posh-zone.
Pusztá-Nyék	Poos-taw-Nyake.
Rákóczi	Rah-kot-ze.

Rimaszombat	Rim-au-som-baut.
Rozgonyi	Roze-gone-ye.
Sajószentpéter	Shau-yo-sant-pay-tar.
Segesvár	Shag-ash-vahr.
Sümeg	Shue-mag.
Szász, Károly	Sahss, Kahr-oy.
Szatmár	Sautmahr.
Szegedi, Róza	Sag-a-de, Rote-za.
Székesfehérvár	Sake-ash-fay-hare-vahr.
Szendrei, Julia	San-dra-e, Yul-e-ah.
Szigetvár	Sig-et-vahr.
Sző-Demeter	Su-Dam-a-tar.
Tét	Tate.
Tisza	Tee-saw.
Tomori, Pál	Tom-or-e, Pahl.
Tompa, Mihály	Tom-paw, Me-hahy.
Tóth, Kálmán	Tote, Kahl-mahn.
Vajda, János	Vauy-daw, Yah-nosh.
Vajda, Júlia	Vauy-daw, Yul-e-ah.
Vörösmarty, Mihály	Ver-esh-mar-te, Me-hahy.
Zágon	Zah-gon.

HUNGARIAN.	ENGLISH.	HUNGARIAN.	ENGLISH.
a is like	<i>a</i> in all or awl.	ö is like	<i>e</i> in Bertie.
á „	<i>a</i> in farm.	ő „	<i>u</i> in fur.
e „	<i>a</i> in man.	u „	<i>u</i> in bull.
é „	<i>a</i> in mane.	ú „	<i>oo</i> in pool.
i „	<i>i</i> in pit.	ü „	<i>u</i> in fuel.
í „	<i>ee</i> in bee.	ű is something like	<i>u</i> in duty.
o „	<i>o</i> in not.		
ó „	<i>o</i> in note.		
s should be sounded as <i>sh</i> .			
Gy is like	<i>g</i> in edge.	Sz is like	<i>s</i> in servant.
Ly „	<i>y</i> in you.	Zs „	<i>z</i> in azure.
Ny „	<i>n</i> in new, except at the end of a word, when the <i>y</i> is silent, as in Arany (Auraun).		

SÁNDOR KISFALUDY.

Born 1772. Died 1844.

Sándor Kisfaludy (1772-1844), the descendant of an ancient and noble house, was born at Sümeg, and, after completing his education in 1792, became a soldier. A year later he joined the Imperial Guard in Vienna, and enjoyed the literary and artistic society of the capital, the while eagerly studying foreign literatures. In 1796 he fought in the French War, was taken prisoner at the siege of Milan, and sent captive to Provence, where the memory of Petrarch inspired him to write. On leaving the Army in 1799, he married Roza Szegedi, the inspiration of the love-songs which laid the foundations of his fame. Petrarch was Kisfaludy's model and master, and most of his poems are inspired by love, though later he found themes in the ancient glory of Hungary's nobility. Essentially a nobleman and a poet of the aristocratic type, his latest works met with scant appreciation, and he died, a lonely and disheartened old man, in 1844.

TWO LOVE SONGS.

I.

My Muse, oh, thou who filled of yore
The world with weeping, let it now
Vibrate with songs of golden joy,
Till east and west the echoes flow.
Oh, stream that drank my bitter tears
Drink now the tears of my delight;
Oh, wind that bore my sad laments,
Blow thou my gladness in thy flight:
For Love, since he did oft behold
My pain and my fidelity,
Hath raised me to that realm of gold
Where he with Psyche dreams throughout eternity.

II.

The reapers had laid low the final swathe,
The length'ning shadows on the greensward sank;
We wandered through the long, sweet meadow-grass,
And paused upon the river's rippling bank.
Then heaven was laid shining at our feet,
Even as heaven shone on us above,
Even as heaven glowed within our hearts
Illumined by the sacred sun of love.

SÁNDOR KISFALUDY.

MIHÁLY CSOKONAI.

Born 1773. Died 1805.

Mihály Csokonai (1773-1805), was the son of a surgeon, and born at Debreczen. Having early lost his father, he received the rudiments of his education from his cultured mother, and began to write poetry while still at school. He soon abandoned his studies, however, in order to seek at Pozsony, where Parliament was then sitting, a noble patron who might encourage his literary aspirations. This quest proved fruitless. On his homeward journey he met Julia Vajda, the “Lilla” of his famous love-songs, but she was compelled by her parents to desert the hapless poet and marry another. Ranging from comic narrative to the deepest philosophic speculations, the works of Csokonai are varied and original; but it is by his love-songs and drinking-songs that he is best known.

TO HOPE.

Bright apparition, born of mist
In heaven's dome aloft,
Thou hast our tortured foreheads kissed
With laughing mouth so oft
That we,
Deceived and blinded, give our lives to thee.

And we, as to an angel guide,
Before thee ever bend;
Still dost thou near us softly glide
In likeness of a friend,
Until
We learn that thou art false and fickle still.

Why with smooth lips didst thou beguile
My trusting heart, and why
Didst thou betray me with a smile
And lure me with a lie?
Alas!
I did believe thy promise soothfast was.

My garden thou didst brightly spread
With pale narcissus sweet,
A merry brook my saplings fed,
Flowers laughed around my feet:
Spring came,
Crowned with a thousand buds and winged with flame.

And every morn my thoughts took wing
 As 'twere a nimble bee,
 Unto my roses fluttering
 With new felicity.
 And yet
 I still had food for longing and regret.
 The love of Lilla¹ did I crave,
 The crown of all my hope,
 And heaven that treasure to me gave:
 A golden dream did ope
 And gild
 The future with sweet promise unfulfilled,
 My fragrant roses all are dead,
 My rippling rills run dry,
 My lusty trees their leaves have shed,
 And sombre is the sky.
 Ah, me!
 The good old world no more will merry be.
 But if, O harsh and ruthless fate,
 My Lilla thou hadst left,
 My song would still speak gladness great:
 Though of all else bereft
 With her
 Sorrow could ne'er my hopeful spirit blur.
 No cares had darkened the clear sky
 Nor veiled the sinking sun
 If she I worship had been nigh
 But I am left alone
 Eheu!
 With her all riches callous would I view.
 Since she is gone, Hope cannot stay,
 For I in shadow dwell.
 For liberty I long alway
 And for the solemn bell
 That will
 Proclaim my freedom when my heart is still.
 No blossoms dance along the mead,
 The voiceful grove is dumb,
 The phantoms of the world recede,
 As death's dark heralds come.
 To you,
 Visions of vanished Hope, I bid adieu.
 MIHÁLY CSOKONAI.

¹ The poet's beloved, who was forced by her parents to wed another.

DÁNIEL BERZSENYI.

Born 1776. Died 1836.

Dániel Berzsenyi (1776-1836), born at Egyházashetye, enjoyed but a brief sojourn at school, and afterwards helped his father, a man of education, in agriculture. After his marriage, some specimens of his work reached Kazinczy, then the leader of the Hungarian literary world, who at once descried Berzsenyi's genius, and encouraged it. The best representative of the old classical school, he studied and imitated Horace, and his Odes in the Horatian style have never been surpassed in Hungarian. Berzsenyi's latter years were embittered by the censure of critics, and by broils with his best friends.

ODE.

Oh God, beyond the highest power of man
To comprehend or to conceive, we know
Thee but by inward thoughts of bounded span,
And, even as the sun's life-giving glow
Illumes the universe, we feel Thy might
Yet cannot narrow it to our dim sight.

The utmost heavens, star-systems without end
Revolving round Thee, and the smallest worm
Invisible in the dust, alike proceed
From Thy great hand; Thy law is the vast norm
Whereby creation and all things that be
Adjust their difference and equality.

From the dark void Thou hast created, Lord,
A thousand species varied beyond ken;
Numberless planets perish at Thy word,
Dissolve to dust, and whirl to life again.
Thy wisdom measures time's deep rivers still,
Zenith and Nadir do Thy praises fill.

The tumult of the tempest, and the flame
Of fringed lightning, do Thy works declare;
The dewdrop and the blossom both proclaim
Thou didst create all that is good and fair.
I kneel before Thy throne with ardent awe;
Would I were chainless and might nearer draw'

Till the blest hour when, from my fetters freed,
I may adore Thee even as Thou art,
I will seek what is good as my best meed,
Treading my destined road with steadfast heart,
And striving, while my strength sufficeth still,
To love Thy law and to obey Thy will.

The darkness of the grave serene I see
Looming before me: though 'tis rough and cold,
Why should I shun what is ordained by Thee?
Although it must at last my limbs enfold,
The vision gives my waiting heart no fear,
For also *there* I know that Thou art near.

DÁNIEL BERZSENYI.

KÁROLY KISFALUDY.

Born 1788. Died 1830.

Károly Kisfaludy (1788-1830), younger brother of Sándor, the poet, was born at Tét, and educated at a military school. While still a youth he fought against the French, and quitted the army at the age of 23. His mother having died in giving him birth, Kisfaludy's father regarded him with absolute aversion, and the poor boy was forced to wander through Germany and Italy, seeking to make himself a career as a painter. Finally, in despair, he returned home, and found shelter in the house of a kindly cobbler. After many disappointments, he at last found the road to fame. One of his plays was given with great success at Pest, and he was thus enabled to pursue his favourite study of history, and also that of Shakespeare and Schiller. Having exchanged the palette for the pen, he continued to write dramas, at first histories, but later comedies. Though a versatile writer, "Mohács Field" alone of his works is well known, and will be long remembered. His chief merit is his artistic treatment of purely Hungarian themes - a style he made popular. Hard work and suffering contributed to his death in the prime of life.

MOHÁCS FIELD.

(The fatal battle of Mohács Field was fought on August 29th, 1526, when the Hungarians, commanded by the brave but reckless Pál Tomori, Archbishop of Kalocsa, were defeated by the Turks under Solyman II. Louis II., the young King of Hungary, while fleeing from the field, was drowned in a swollen stream, where his horse stumbled and fell. The Turkish Dominion in Hungary lasted for two hundred years after this disastrous battle.)

Oh, field of mourning red and lone, oh, grave
Of our dead greatness, with a heavy sigh
I greet thee! Harsh decay has trailed her wing
Across the earth wherein our heroes lie.
The fierce, exultant lightning blazed forth here
Upon the lifeless bodies of the slain:
Scarred and forsaken is their sepulchre
Deep in the dark breast of this fatal plain.
Tomori, thou proud leader, oh wherefore
Didst thou desert the Archbishop's sacred chair?
For thee our best and bravest children died,
Beneath thy banners fell the young and fair.
The flames of battle filled the quivering sky
And, led by thee, unnumbered heroes fell.
Too narrow for thy pride was Hungary,
Yet see how narrow is thine earthy cell!

Mute is the trumpet, and with hungry rust
The steel is red. Rest, conquered Captain, rest -
Fortune cannot torment thy weary dust,
Thou hast found peace, of all God's gifts the best.
Oh, many a heart warm with bright hopes and joys,
This direful havoc hath struck cold and still,
Even as a swift tempest oft destroys
The noblest saplings of the wooded hill.

Lo! here lies one renowned for hero-deeds -
His lifeless limbs are trampled in the mire,
His fair locks stiffen as his forehead bleeds,
His soul departs as smoke wafts out of fire.
Beside the road his anxious lady stands
Watching and longing her true knight to see:
When a leaf stirs, with trembling lips and hands
She turns, believing that it must be he.

A chaplet of fair blossoms she has bound
To crown his brows withal, - but ah, in vain:
The fading wreath falls slowly to the ground
When she is told he will not come again.
Oh, Mohács, fatal field of woe and death,
Her heart was cleft even as his that day,
When dire defeat from honour scourged the breath.
Beside her grave there shall keep watch always,

Fidelity's mute angel. Oh, alas,
How many warriors worthy to have known
Centuries of achievement here are laid,
Bereft of splendour, and with not a stone
To mark their place of rest, with valiant arm
The patriot fights for liberty, he rides
Through ghastly scenes of carnage, wild alarm
Makes his tired horse fret as he spurs its sides.

Then, as inert its master sways and falls,
The charger gallops on, with flowing mane,
Nostrils dilated, eyes like fiery balls,
And riderless it plunges o'er the slain.
Then, as before the castle gate it stops,
The empty saddle tells the fatal tale:
Heart-broken the young widow pines and drops,
Smitten to earth by sorrow's lightning pale.

The house, once home of peace and simple joys,
Now stands a gaping ruin to the sky;
The sovereign oak that braved so many storms
Now in the mire a mighty wreck doth lie.
How many warriors have died even so,
How few the fruits of fame and glory reap!

For in defeat their star must quench its glow
 And in a nameless pit their ashes sleep.
 The darkness of oblivion blurs their praise,
 For by their dust the piping shepherd strolls;
 He knows not o'er whose bones his flock may graze,
 And yet the shadow of heroic souls
 Inspires him, and his song is a lament.
 The traveller pauses on the fatal field:
 The throb of sorrow in his heart is pent
 To think how man to cruel fate must yield.
 With downcast eyes and heavy heart he comes,
 Musing on destiny's unstable pride,
 While a pale mist creeps through the evening gold
 The river from our curious eyes to hide.
 There, on that spot, Louis, our ill-starred King,
 Struggled beneath his horse's armoured weight,
 In vain, with weary arm now brandishing
 His blunted sword - none saves him from his fate.
 The marshy bank gapes for its royal prey
 Whose golden armour now is blurred with mud,
 His bruised limbs are flecked with scum and spray,
 And now he sinks into the hungry flood.
 Thus didst thou perish, gallant King, and so
 To die is bitter - for thou wast but young!
 With thee the star of Hungary sank low,
 For thee laments by countless lips were sung.
 May peace still hover o'er thy place of rest,
 Thou who hast died within that sombre hour
 When envious factions tore their mother's breast,
 And losing unity, lost us our power.
 For so the chain that to the soul can pierce
 Was forged; - yet, land of saddest memory,
 Not alien hands dealt all those onslaughts fierce
 But those of thine own children, Hungary!
 Oh, home of hopeless care, mother of grief,
 Behold, this field commemorates thy woe!
 Beneath the harsh hand of the Moslem chief
 How soon was Buda's ancient pride laid low.
 Under the rule of Solyman this land
 Lost all its' glory and its' old-time strength,
 While from our towers, like a mocking hand,
 The crescent standard flung its boastful length.
 Begone, ye gloomy visions, for anew,
 After long years, the sun for us arose:
 Buda still stands, - there are Hungarians true
 Who yet shall triumph o'er their country's foes.

Inspired by patriotism let us see
Rich promise in the future half-concealed,
And thou, great Golgotha, vast cemetery,
A garden fair shalt blossom - Mohács Field!

KÁROLY KISFALUDY

FERENCZ KÖLCSEY.

Born 1790. Died 1838.

Ferencz Kölcsey (1790-1838), born at Sző-Demeter, was early left an orphan, and his youth was further saddened by the loss of the sight of one eye. A studious, thoughtful boy, at the school of Debreczen he pursued a course of study to fit him for the profession of a lawyer, but, his strong individuality rebelling against the prosaic routine, he abandoned the law after a few years' practice in Pest, and withdrew to his estate, Cseke, where he devoted himself to agriculture and study. Perceiving the weakness of current Hungarian literature, he attacked many of the minor poets of the day (including Berzsenyi and Csokonai), with a Byronic power of satire which hardly added to his popularity in lettered circles. Exchanging criticism for essay-writing and verse-making, he continued his literary labours until, in 1829, he was appointed Notary for the County of Szatmár. In 1832 he was elected Member of Parliament. Thenceforth, his greatest fame was acquired as an orator, his speeches having a permanent literary value. He was an ardent advocate of the use of the Hungarian language in State documents, political and legal proceedings, etc. (instead of the customary Latin), and of religious liberty and social reform. Ultimately he was forced to resign his seat in Parliament, and to return to Cseke, where he died in 1838. His romantic lyrics and his patriotic poems are alike tinged with melancholy, and his didactic verse (such as "Vanitas Vanitatum"), with cynicism.

VANITAS VANITATUM.

Here is the sacred script; the pages turn
With mind mature, and from it thou shalt learn
The ancient lesson of humanity:
Solomon, wisest of the ancient seers
Tells us the world, in every changing phase,
The dew of summer, snow that bournes the years,
All, all that doth surround our measured days,
Splendour and glory, *all* is vanity.

Our earth is as an ant-hill swiftly scattered,
A transient vision in a moment shattered:
The lightning and the thunder heaven-shaking
Are but a hum of bees, a vagrant light;
History floats past like a sigh in flight,
A thousand years are but a bubble breaking.

And Alexander's brilliant, conquering span,
An idle chase, pursuit without a plan,
A feverish hunt that ended with the day:
Attila's ruthless host was but a troop
Of rats, a cloud of wasps, such as do swoop
Sudden upon us, and sudden fade away.

The glorious victories Matthias² won,
The mighty triumphs of Napoleon,
The far-famed battle fought at Waterloo,
Were petty struggles for the cock-pit meet,
And Virtue's glowing vision pale and sweet
Is but the vapour of malarial dew.

When hearts are kindled by the high and good,
'Tis but a clogging of the tortured blood;
The deaths of Cato and of Socrates,
Nicholas Zrinyi's³ last heroic sigh,
Are episodes in a long comedy,
And life is formed of hollow scenes like these!

Plato and Aristotle, what had ye
As guerdon for your great philosophy?
Fantastic dreams within your brows ye bear.
Philosophy hath value none at all;
It is mere ignorance methodical,
Cloud-palaces and castles built of air!

Demosthenes, for all his fluent grace,
Was but a babbler in the market-place,
And Xenophon, despite his honied tones,
A gossip by the spinning-wheel; the dream
Of Pindar was delirium. I deem
Phidias nothing wrought but crude and rugged stones.

What is the flame of life that lights the world
But a swift spark into dark shadow hurled?
What is the tumult of man's struggle here
But the soft flutter of the painted wing
Of a frail butterfly! Is anything
Endowed with value that outlasts a year?

Where end and where beginning meet, we see
Our leaders, faith and hope, e'en as they be -
Dim, dappled mist and fleeting rainbow vapour.
Our happiness is moonshine, and our sorrow
A waft of smoke that lives not till to-morrow,
For life itself is but a flick'ring taper.

Our very breath feeds our mortality;
Dream'st thou the endless law will change for thee?
Eternal fame dost thou demand of death?
'Tis but the subtle essence of a flower,
Pent in its perfumed prison for an hour,
Surviving the dead rose but for a breath.

² Matthias Corvinus I., King of Hungary.

³ This hero fell defending the stronghold of Szigetvár against the Turks, A.D. 1566.

Therefore, the stoic's lesson haste to learn,
For wise is he who can indifferent spurn
 Beneath his feet the hollow toys of life;
Stedfast, unmoved, like some great rock apart,
Sorrow and joy both banished from thy heart,
 Uplift thyself above the puny strife.

For though the little earth pursues its way
Through space, or pause in flight - golden or grey,
 The sun and moon above our heads should fly -
And be it light or shadow floating there,
Glory or tempest in the arching air,
Beauty or grim unloveliness around,
All things are equal to the mind profound,
 Since all is vanity beneath the sky.

FERENCZ KÖLCSEY.

HYMN.

Oh, God the good Hungarians bless at last
 With happy spirit and with fruitful toil,
 Preserve them when they struggle with a foe
And curb the tide of care that follows fast:
 Oh, may a merry season crown the soil,
 For we have expiated long ago
Transgressions of the future and the past.

Lord, Thou our ancestors didst safely lead
 O'er the Carpathians' sacred crest - through Thee
 Bendegúz's⁴ seed a glorious country won
Where Danube roars along its shining bed
 And Tisza's foam speeds singing swift and free,
 Árpád's heroic race from sire to son
Stood, by Thy grace, at a brave nation's head.

For us on Kunság's fields the tasselled wheat
 Swayed in ripe clusters, and on Tokay's vine
 Thou didst drop nectar: Thou our flag hast stood
Upon the verge where cross and crescent meet,
 When Matthias⁵ triumphed, Lord, his power was Thine
 When his brave legions, like a furious flood,
Laid low Vienna's walls in dire defeat.

⁴ Father of Álmos, whose son Árpád (died 907) conquered Hungary in 896, and was the first ruler of that land.

⁵ Matthias Corvinus I., King of Hungary.

Alas! our sins Thy righteous anger woke,
Thy lightnings seared us, and Thy thunders bowed
Our heads unto the dust: the Mongol horde⁶
Rained arrows on us - 'neath the Turkish yoke
Our shoulders ached, and oft-times wild and loud
Osman's⁷ fierce host exulted when, oh, Lord,
Defeat to us Thy just disfavour spoke.

Beautiful motherland, against thee turn
Thy children, and assail thy patient breast;
Discord and inward strife have ruined thee;
Thou art to us as 'twere a funeral urn
Bearing our ashes in their final rest.
The persecuted fugitive doth flee,
At home no refuge can he now discern.

He scales the height and to the valley crawls,
Followed by grief and by pale-eyed despair;
Above his head a vault of hungry flame,
And at his feet a wild, red ocean brawls:
Where once a fortress stood, the earth is bare
Save for a crumbling cairn; where joy once came
And wit and mirth, the tear of anguish falls.

Instead of blithe, sweet song, the wind bears fast
The dying moan, the rattle of the breath
That speaks the end. Liberty cannot bloom
In this scarred, reddened earth - but yet, at last,
Oh, God, deliver us from shame and death,
Let mercy shine on us amid the gloom,
We have atoned for errors still to come
As well as for transgressions of the past.

FERENCZ KÖLCSEY.

⁶ The Tartar invasion of 1241.

⁷ Osman was a celebrated Turkish General.

MIHÁLY VÖRÖSMARTY.

Born 1800. Died 1855.

Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), bom at Pusztá-Nyék, was early thrown upon his own resources, owing to the death of his father and to his meagre fortune. Like so many other Hungarian poets he became a tutor, at the same time cultivating the poetical talent which had shown itself in his childhood, and also studying Shakespeare and Homer. Equally skilful in lyric and epic, he also attempted drama, and translated "Julius Caesar," and "King John." His innovations and improvements in language and style won for him the title of the " Hungarian Poet-King," and he was, as well, a literary critic of no little ability. Crushed in mind and in body by the disasters of 1848, he died at Pest seven years later.

TO A DREAMER.

(To Laura.)

What mystic vision fills those beauteous eyes?
On what far prospect shines their radiance clear?
Is it upon the dark flow'r of the past,
Spangled with disillusionment's pale tear?

Or on the misty veil of days to be
Some sombre phantom dost thou now descry,
Which thou dost fear to see? Ah, seek no more,
By means like these to learn thy destiny.

Look on the world; of all the teeming souls
That people it, how few true joy receive.
Dreams are the bane of our wild, fevered life
Whose painted skies with colours false deceive.

Wherein is happiness for man, ah, where?
In gold or fame, in treasure or renown?
Life's glory is but as a restless flood,
To him who sinks therein peace is unknown.

He who a bud seeks may not bear away
An arbour with sweet roses twined and crost;
He who would see looks not upon the sun;
Joy is not found by those who seek it most.

Only to him who humble is and true,
Noble of heart, lured not by love of gain
Or thirst for might and splendour, his desires
Can never bring the bitterness of pain.

Look not to the horizon of thy dreams,
Thy *dreams* of power and conquest, land and gold,
Only so much of this great world is ours
To call our own, as in our hearts we hold.

The past and future are a sea too wide,
Too vast and dim, in one breast to be pent;
Castles of mist sway on its cloudy tide,
And the chill spectre of light long since spent.

Such visions freeze the soul in solitude;
If thou hast aught to cherish or hold dear,
To trust in, or to hope for, shun such *dreams*,
And cling to happiness that still is near.

In a perspective brighter, but untrue,
Lose not thyself, lest thou shouldst lose withal
The joy that *can* be thine, and sadly rue
My folly, and for nought have given all.

Ah, open not thine arms to treacherous *dreams*,
Turn back thine eyes so beautiful, as though
A bird enticed by a whole forest's bloom
Winged back at last unto its own green bough.

Give unto him that loves thee the pure light
Of thy sweet youth, that radiance on him shed,
Who art his sun - rob him not of his noon -
Thy love is day - give him not night instead.

MIHÁLY VÖRÖSMARTY.

THE CALL OF THE FATHERLAND.

Unto thy fatherland with dauntless heart
Be loyal, oh, Hungarian, for the soil
That was thy cradle will thy grave yet be,
The source and sum of all thy love and toil.

Beyond our frontiers is for thee no home,
Whether thy fate be happy or unblest,
Here only with thy strivings canst thou come,
Here only when thy woes are over, rest.

This earth thy sires have stained with noble blood,
And sanctified by deeds of splendid fame;
Throughout a thousand years hath brightly stood
The memory of their triumph and their name.

'Twas here heroic Árpád⁸ and his horde
 Fought for the fatherland, and it was here
 That brave Hunyadi drew his conquering sword
 And freed us from the yoke of many a year.
 Oh, liberty, here have thy banners flown,
 And here beneath their reddened folds have died
 Our best and bravest - here the hero's crown
 Hath rimmed the forehead flushed with noble pride.
 Amid disasters, after weary strife,
 Diminished but not crushed, the nation clings
 To the dear land that gave its fathers life,
 And was the cradle of heroic kings.
 Unto the home of all the nations, we,
 Unto the world, unto creation, cry -
 'A thousand years of patient hope must be
 Pregnant with fate - are we to live or die?'
 Ah, no, those valiant breasts have not spent here
 Their blood in vain, nor yet in vain have burst
 Such loyal hearts, o'erladen with despair:
 It cannot be we are so darkly curst.
 Has all this lofty spirit and true zeal,
 This holy purpose and this patient pain,
 Been wasted on our hopes of future weal,
 And, self-consuming, struggled here in vain?
 Oh, there will come - there *must* come - a new day,
 A better age, that golden time of peace,
 For which a hundred thousand martyrs pray,
 When all our troubles and our wrongs will cease!
 Or else must come upon this hapless land
 A death supreme, a final overthrow,
 When a whole nation deep in blood shall stand
 While swallowed in the hungry gulf below.
 Around the vast grave wherein we should sink
 Races and peoples would with awe appear,
 And, pausing silently upon the brink,
 Pay to our doom the tribute of a tear.
 Unto thy native land, with dauntless heart
 Be true, Hungarian, for if thou dost fall
 Thy father's home shall thy last haven be,
 The sod of Hungary thy precious pall!

⁸ The first ruler of United Hungary. Died 907.

Beyond our frontiers is for thee no home,
Whether thy fate be happy or unblest;
Here only, while thou livest, canst thou come,
Here only, when thy life is over, rest.

MIHÁLY VÖRÖSMARTY.

BARON JÓZSEF EÖTVÖS.

Born 1813. Died 1871.

Baron József Eötvös (1813-1871), was born in Buda, and while still a youth was subject to many conflicting influences, his family being orthodox and royalist, his tutor a democrat of the French School, and his favourite teacher an ardent nationalist. In later life, when a leader of the patriotic party, mindful of these early impressions, Eötvös strove constantly to reconcile extremes! Having finished his legal studies, he travelled for a time, and on his return published his first great novel, dealing with social and international problems. Several others of the same type followed, and some rather feeble poetry, of which only a few lyrics deserve remembrance. Eötvös devoted his life to two great aims - the abolition of serfdom and the institution of a central Government based on popular representation. Hardly was his dream realised, and he himself appointed Minister of Education in the new ministry, when the Revolution of 1848 drove him into exile. He lived, however, to witness the reconciliation (in 1867) between the people and their Sovereign, which he had striven so earnestly to bring about, and resumed his ministerial office before his death.

A LAST TESTAMENT.

When the close of this rough path
I attain, and up the steep
Weary climb, until I win
The cold grave where I shall sleep,
Raise no marble o'er my dust;
But the lasting victory
Of the cause for which I fought,
May that my memorial be!
If ye pass beside my grave
Linger there, my friends, I pray,
And our best-loved melody
Sing above my voiceless clay.
One of our old Magyar songs,
Fervent, glorious, wildly sweet,
I in death perchance may hear
And my frozen heart-strings beat.
And, if ye stay there, so long,
When the melody is over,
As you gave the poet song,
Give a tear unto the lover.

BARON JÓZSEF EÖTVÖS.

JÁNOS ARANY.

Born 1817. Died 1882.

János Arany (1817-1882). Born at Nagy Szalonta, the son of simple but worthy peasants, his first reading lessons were from the Bible and the Psalter. At Debreczen he studied the classic poets, learnt German and French, became acquainted with the works of modern authors, and himself made some essays in poetry. On leaving school, he aspired to an artistic career, and was an actor for a time; but wearying of the life, he returned home, on foot and after many hardships, only to find that his father had become blind. On his mother's death, which followed close on his return, Arany nobly renounced his cherished dreams and remained with his afflicted father, having obtained the post of schoolmaster in his native town. Later, he became notary of Nagy Szalonta, and married very happily. When his first literary works appeared, they were enthusiastically received, and his brother-poet, Petőfi was among the first to welcome them; but the Revolution of 1848 swept away all the promise and fulfilment of the time. After holding a Government appointment, Arany returned to his old profession of teacher, and, in 1860, as director of the Kisfaludy Society, he removed to Pest, where he started a literary magazine. The loss of his dearly loved daughter in 1864 crushed his poetic activity for some years, during which he translated a number of masterpieces, including "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Hamlet," and "King John." The greatest of Hungary's epic poets, Arany found his most lofty inspiration in Hungarian history, and though his language lacks the brilliance of Vörösmarty's, it is more forceful and characteristic, and more intensely Hungarian. A master of the ballad-form, in which he followed Scottish and Sicule models, his lyrics, though sometimes not without charm, are his least successful compositions; but his prose works (literary criticism, etc.), are of great value.

RACHEL'S LAMENTATION.

On the soft, snowy folds of my quiet couch
How fast they sleep, my bonnie babes at rest;
Is the dream sweet, my darlings? do not stir
Till ye awake to smile upon my breast.
Oh, hollow hope that lures me to believe
They will arise, 'tis cruel to deceive.
They will not wake - who knows it more than I?
Oh, slumber that surpasseth gentle sleep -
To my low laughter they make no reply:
The knowledge kills me, but I cannot weep.
I whisper loving prattle, but they will
No more to greet me part those lips so still.
Oh, they are dead, *dead*; lo! this wound is deep,
Death would not enter by a smaller door:
Could not a finger have the force to sweep
An atom from its cell for evermore?
A tender dove is slain as well, we know,
By a light touch as by a heavy blow.

Now let me kiss this gash that, though so cold
And still, cries unto heaven loud and clear,
Like an inspired mouth. My tears will lave
Those sombre stains: ay, cry to God's own ear
That he who so that precious life did take
May swift and awful expiation make.

But what avail my moans? My sons are dead:
A river rippling with their murderer's blood
Would not restore them - when the trickle red,
That pulses through the heart, by violence rude
Is clogged and frozen, not a purple sea
Could give again the lost vitality.

Oh, loathèd Herod, when thou didst decide
To whet thy blade upon the innocent,
Why didst thou not thyself in fiendish pride,
Perform the deed and give the fearful hent
With thirsty eyes enfrenzied for the prey,
Why cam'st thou not thyself my babes to slay?

Perchance there would have burst a blessèd spring
Of pity from thy marble heart, if thou
Hadst witnessed my despair, oh cursèd King:
It might have saved my darlings martyred now.
But thou didst send an hireling harsh and grim:
What mercy dared I hope to draw from him!

Yet even he, as I did wildly kneel
Imploring him to spare my babies, wept;
I saw the tears beneath his eye-lids steal
And hope within my heart like sunshine leapt.
I deemed he would not do thy hellish will,
Forgetting that he was thy servant still.

Oh, cruel King, hadst thou thyself been there,
Thyself beholding all my love and pain,
If thou thyself hadst heard my anguished prayer,
Surely my sons would never have been slain.
But nay - thy slave obeyed thee - and, behold
My bonnie babes lie silent now and cold!

Daughters of Bethlehem, that shared with me
The blessed name of "Mother" in the past,
Think not with envy of my misery
As greater than your own, though it be vast:
None had more reason for proud hope than I,
Nor hath more sorrow had beneath the sky.

Come to the burial place with me - nay,
Horror and loathing fade - I do not shrink:
My sons in God's own keeping rest away,
Where their limbs lie I do not fear to think.

Their souls are in the hand of God I know,
 With the souls of thy sons, sisters in woe.
 Behold, the year is of it's Spring bereft,
 A generation from our tribe is torn,
 And sleeps within the grave-yard: there are left
 Some youths in Bethlehem, but no bright morn
 Shall celebrated be of natal day
 For them, until two years have passed away.
 Ah, woe is me, for barren is this age!
 But, stay, I see the future slowly ope!
 He comes - of whom the seer and ancient sage
 Foretold the advent- dayspring of God's hope;
 Judea's King is born! I feel, I know,
 In Bethlehem he holds his court below.
 Blood-thirsty tyrant Herod, all thine ire
 Was spent on us in vain: He lives, He lives!
 He did not perish! like awakened fire
 Time now its promised glory to us gives...
 Him whom thou dreadst thy power can never move -
 The Holy Spirit of God's truth and love!

JÁNOS ARANY.

TO MY SON.

Thank God the day is over! with its glow
 Its cares and fears depart: within, sinks low
 A solitary candle, while, outside,
 The darkness doth in furtive watch abide.
 Still awake, little son? behold thy bed
 Is soft and warm, - lay there thy weary head,
 But first, that holy thoughts may end the day,
 Fold thou thy hands and pray.
 Lo, I am but a poet, and that breed
 Is ever poor, prey to the pinch of need:
 Nought but a fair, unsullied name can I
 Bequeath to thee, when my turn comes to die.
 Therefore, the riches of religion seek,
 The strength and refuge of the pure and meek,
 There shalt thou find unbounded wealth alway,
 So fold thy hands and pray.
 Religion is the treasure of the poor.
 It teaches, and who needs the lesson more! -
 To suffer and to hope: alas, we must
 Suffer and hope until our hearts are dust.

Would that within my soul were shrined again
The faith unquestioning that life hath slain.
But that in thee abide and grow it may,
Fold now thy hands and pray.

The time will come - and soon perchance - when thou
Must leave the friends that share thy frolics now,
And for a stranger's meed in sadness toil:
Then on thy wound let faith be healing oil,
The grace of heaven bless thy secret tears,
And keep thee steadfast through the sunless years;
That golden light may fill life's desert grey,
Fold then thy hands and pray.

On honour's shoulder heavy loads are set,
As thou shalt learn with agony, and yet
When wrong and evil bow thy soul, and when
An earthly Eden blesses godless men,
When hope is wan and glory's vision pales,
Let true religion level the great scales
And both to just and equal balance sway;
So fold thy hands and pray.

And if, when in thy prime the bitter smart
Of exile should devour thy lonely heart,
Thy native-land for thee no dwelling-place,
'Twixt cradle and 'twixt grave so wide a space
It rims a century, - in thy distress
Bethink thee how through this vast wilderness
It is God's law that we must wend our way,
And fold thy hands and pray.

Hope for another and a better home
Where the right triumphs and no sorrows come,
Else were this world and thine own fate so dark
Thou mightest murmur against God, - but mark,
This dream once thine, thou hast a staff and stay.
This kiss from me my love and hope doth say,
And still, that even grief may be divine,
Pray, little son of mine.

JÁNOS ARANY.

THE BALLAD OF KING LADISLAUS.

(Ladislaus or László V., jealous of the popularity of the two orphan sons of the heroic Hunyadi, had the elder executed on an unfounded charge of treason. The younger, Matthias, he kept a captive at his Court until, in 1457, he himself was poisoned at Prague. The young prisoner thus set free afterwards became King of Hungary, and is famous in history as Matthias Corvinus I. Arany in this ballad attempts to portray the guilty terrors of the haunted Ladislaus.)

The night is dark, the south wind roars,
And upon Buda's tower
The weather-cock creaks to and fro
At the wild tempest's power.

"Who is it? Who is there?" "Nay, nay,
My lord king, sleep again:
Rest, Ladislaus - for soon will cease
The torrents on thy pane.

The clouds are rent as if with fire;
From every flooded tower,
Along the copper spouts, rain sweeps
At the wild tempest's power.

"Why roars the mob? Do they demand
My oath, my oath⁹ to hear?"
"My lord, the folk are still as death,
'Tis thunder cracks our ear."

The fetters clash, - now they are void, -
Now, down the city wall,
The captives¹⁰ like a shadow drop,
And safe to earth they fall.

"Hunyadi's sons do rend their chains!"
"Nay, nay, most royal sir -
Ladislaus thou know'st is dead,
The child a prisoner."

Far, far below, an anxious troop
Creeps off into the night;
Kanizsa and Rozgonyi now
Have saved themselves by flight.

"Double the guard, and first of all
Before Matthias' door."

"Matthias still is there, my lord
His friends are there no more."

The cloud is spent, the tempest past:
The foaming azure bars
Of the swift Danube mirror now
A thousand little stars.

"Away - for on Bohemian soil
Safety were surely found."

"Wherefore this fear, sire? peace doth reign
Unbroken all around."

⁹ *i.e.*, the oath sworn by the King to Hunyadi's widow that her two sons, Ladislaus and Matthias, should be safer under his protection.

¹⁰ Kanizsa and Rozgonyi, two Hungarian nobles, adherents of the elder Hunyadi, who escaped from Buda during a violent storm.

The sleeper still in slumber lies;
The sentries, anxious-eyed,
Rozgonyi and Kanizsa deem
In every bush to hide.

“How far unto the frontier still?”

“We cross it at this hour;
Fear not, lord King: thou know’st the youth
Is chained and in thy power.”

The sleeper wakes - the fugitive
Starts up, for men may hear
Thunder, and see dire lightning¹¹ flash
Though all the sky is clear.

“Faithful Bohemian, give thy King,
A cool draught of the best!”

“King - quench thy thirst with this, - it soothes,
And - *like the grave* - brings rest.”

Within Bohemian earth doth lie
Ladislaus all alone.

The captive doth return, to fill
The traitor’s vacant throne.

JÁNOS ARANY.

PATIENCE AND COURAGE.

The tempest of the heart wakes and subsides
As doth the tempest of the sea, for lo,
Th’ essential element of joy is woe;
The atmosphere of happiness grows bright
Purified by regret: a radiant bow
Spans the dark clouds of grief with prism light
And peace again blesses the troubled tides.

But yester-eve Hope felled the only mast
Left standing on my ship, and dim despair
Lashed me unto a plank; yet now the air
Above me and the waters all around
Are soft and tranquil; wooded hollows fair
Beckon me with green arms to the safe ground,
And all the terrors of the storm are past.

Not easily the tortured heart is cleft, -
It mellows and becomes more apt to hold
A deeper impress of delight. The fold
And hearth whereto the weary labourer toils

¹¹ *i.e.*, the tempest of a nation’s righteous wrath.

For rest and gladness, when he groweth old,
Enrich him with no greater precious spoils
Than freedom from the cares behind him left.

There is no wilderness beneath the sky
So arid, and so sterile, and so blind;
No man could there one tuft of verdure find
Or gain some grassy knoll, some hidden rill;
If the harsh blast with mighty scourge of wind
Have buried the oasis, he seeks still,
Inspired by blessed hope that ne'er can die.

Oh, desert of my life, thou dost enclose
A place where peace may dwell! - oh, perilous sea
Thy waves can never drive incessantly
The vessel of my heart in stormy thrall!
What though our life from care is never free
And sorrows gather with our days? it all
Is compensated in our brief repose.

JÁNOS ARANY.

MIHÁLY TOMPA.

Born 1817. Died 1868.

Mihály Tompa (1817-1868), the son of a bootmaker, was born at Rimaszombat, and, after a youth spent in hardship and poverty, became a tutor, and made the acquaintance at Petőfi. While yet a student, he had begun to collect folk-legends, and he early published poems in various journals. In 1846, the year after his meeting with Petőfi, he began to study for the law, but a clerical post having been offered him, he took Holy Orders, and during the Revolution acted as Chaplain, when he witnessed the Battle of Schwechat. After the Revolution, he settled down to a clerical and literary life and married. Devoted to his family, his flock, and his poetic art, he led a peaceful, eventless life, until the loss of his two sons broke his heart. Consoled only by the devotion of his wife and the loyal affection of his friends, among whom was János Arany, death released him in 1868. Tompa is one of the greatest of the many great lyric-poets of Hungary, and none has excelled him in the love of nature. His exquisite insight and sympathy endow his nature-poems with a peculiar charm, while his humorous ballads and folk-songs are equally good.

TO THE STORK.

The air is soft, the meads grow bright;
Good stork, hast thou come back to rest
With thy soft brood in thine old nest,
Now that the world is full of light?

Away, away - be not deceived
By cheating sunshine, for behold,
Life is grown grey, and grim, and cold,¹²
Spring's voice no more must be believed.

Our fields are cemeteries now;
Shun them, and shun the pool that laves
The bank with sullen purple waves;
'Tis blood that makes it overflow.

Seek not to roost on a tall spire,
Thine ancient haunt - do not return,
For smoking ashes still may burn,
And danger lurks in dying fire.

'Twere best for thee my house to leave,
No more to build upon my roof,
But is there one 'gainst sorrow proof?
Where is the home that doth not grieve?

¹² An allusion to the sad epoch after the Revolution of 1848.

Away, away - a sunnier coast
Invites thee, happy bird; like thee
Would that two homes we had. Woe's me,
We have but one - one nearly lost.

Fly to the South - far from us fly,
And if thou see'st on that bright strand
A wanderer from our native-land,
Tell him we perish, that we die;

That like an unbound sheaf of grain
We fall apart; - that graves now hold
Our noblest, or the dungeon cold;
That those who live, live but in pain.

Some rise and seek across the sea
Another home. In every heart
Throbs sorrow's deep and bitter smart;
Freedom brings anguish to the free.

Our troubles motherhood deprive
Of joy and hope: since life is worse
Than death, to look upon the hearse
Bearing their sons, no mothers grieve.

The old man knows his end is near,
And doth exult to feel it so.
Oh, friendly bird, where'er ye go
Do thou our lamentations bear.

Reveal how - 'tis our shame to say -
Not only like a smitten oak
Are we o'erthrown by a harsh stroke,
But in the core creeps chill decay.

Patriot denounces patriot;
Brother sells brother; father, son:
Nay, shroud this in oblivion,
'Twere best our shame should be forgot.

Let those who under alien skies
Lament our sorrows, never know
They should not only weep our woe,
But our unworthiness despise.

MIHÁLY TOMPA.

THE BIRD TO HIS SONS.

(An allegorical poem addressed by Tompa to the younger generation of poets, after the disastrous Revolution of 1848.)

Silent upon a barren bough how long
Will ye remain, sad choristers and mute?
Have ye forgotten the sweet lay and song
I taught you? Though blithe music ill would suit
Our present lot, though wit and mirth be gone
And at the notes no merry echoes ring,
Although the song should be a mournful one
Sing, sons, I prithee sing!

A tempest has our forest refuge torn,
No leafy shelter doth receive us now.
Still silent? Will ye vanish with the morn,
Will ye desert us when we are brought low?
Ah, in an alien grove your song would be
Strange and uncomprehended - curb your wing
And still abide with us, for sad are we:
Sing, sons, I prithee sing!

Sing of our country and her past sublime,
The golden harvest of the days of yore;
Sing of her future, of that glorious time
When the bare earth shall laugh with flowers once more.
The music shall awake the folded seed
And o'er the quickened fields fair morning bring,
Helping with growing hope our present need:
Sing, sons, I prithee sing!

Here in this bush your ancient home behold,
Where first ye spread your wings; will ye not rest
After a vagrant flight through cloud aisles cold
At last, and gladly, in your former nest?
Although the wind hath rent it, will ye be
Like callous men, the wreck abandoning?
Fly not to alien shores beyond the sea,
But sing, I prithee sing!

MIHÁLY TOMPA.

SÁNDOR PETŐFI.

Born 1823. Died 1849.

Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), greatest of Hungarian lyric-poets, was born at Kiskőrös, the son of a prosperous butcher. He studied at various schools, but his fiery spirit resented the yoke of discipline, and he won no scholastic honours. Disowned by his father, he then began a wandering life, which lasted some years. Like Shakespeare, he acted as a theatre-servant for a time, and then entered the army, but failed to obtain promotion from the ranks. On his regiment changing quarters, his health became so bad that he was discharged, and, after a short interval of repose, entered a college, where he made the acquaintance of Mór Jókai, the famous novelist. Though he had written several successful poems, his old passion for the stage led him to become an actor. Thrown out of employment at Pozsony, he was for a time a parliamentary copyist, and then set out once more on a theatrical tour, which ended at Debreczen. After a bitter winter of illness and privation, he started, penniless and on foot, for Pest, with his poems in his pocket. He sought and obtained the help of Vörösmarty, then already famous, who found him a publisher. His livelihood assured by a post as sub-editor, he ardently pursued his literary studies and read English, French, and German poets. Meanwhile, his own poems appeared in rapid succession and with ever-growing success, the youth of Hungary waxing enthusiastic over the new genius. Though he tried his hand at epics, it is in the *lyric* form that he excelled; like so many other Hungarian men of letters, he was influenced by Shakespeare, whose “Coriolanus” he translated. In 1847, he married Julia Szendrei, to whom he was passionately devoted, but their happiness was short-lived, for on the outbreak of the Revolution Petőfi hastened to enrol himself in the national army under General Bern, with whom he fought, until, at the Battle of Segesvár, he met the heroic death for which he had always hoped. Proud and idealistic, with a frank faith in his own high destiny, Petőfi joined to his other gifts of intellect the qualities of sincerity and simplicity. He called himself “Nature’s wild-flower,” and his lyrics are autobiographical in many cases. Loved and understood by all classes and types of Hungarians, Petőfi’s lyrics have assured him a high and enduring place in the literature of his country. For the great Hungarian plain, the scene of his earliest years, and to him an emblem of liberty, he had a romantic love which is reflected in many of his finest works.

A THOUGHT TORMENTS ME.

A thought torments me: 'tis that I may die
Among my pillows, fading like a bloom
Whose root the canker gnaws, or wasting slow
Like a pale candle in an empty room.
Oh, God, it is to Thee my fervent prayer
Thou wilt from such a death thy servant spare!

Let me be as a tree by lightning riven
Or by a storm torn up, in nature's ire;
A rock from mountain-crest to valley driven
By an earth-shaking thunderbolt of fire;
When, of their thralldom tired, the nations rise,
And the red standard boldly is unfurled
Above the battlefield, with this device,
These blessed words, "Freedom for all the world!"

When with bright eyes and cheeks by ardour flushed,
They throng unto the conflict triumphing,
When tyranny is overthrown and crushed,
When east and west victorious echoes ring -
Then let me die!
Death's pangs let me feel
As my last words fly
On the clash of steel;
When the trumpets call
And the cannon thunder,
Then may, I fall
And my corse lie under
The hoofs of the steeds
That to victory dash
When the conquered bleeds
And the squadrons crash.

Then, when the solemn day of mourning comes,
Let them take up my scattered bones with care,
And to the sound of dirge and muffled drums,
'Mid drooping flags, let them my ashes bear
Unto the grave where all those heroes lie
Who fought for thee, O Holy Liberty!

SÁNDOR PETŐFI.

THOUGHTS OF A PATRIOT.

The sun has set, and darkness softly falls,
No stars hang brilliant in the pathless sky;
Only the lamp that lights my vigil burns,
My lamp, and my great love for Hungary.

Patriotism is as a dome of stars
That flame eternally with sacred glow.
Alas for thee, oh, my unhappy land,
Few, few such stars above thee glisten now.

The pallid flame of my weak lantern shakes.
 Why does it tremble so? Midnight is nigh;
 About me hover many noble forms,
 The mighty ghosts of bygone Hungary.
 Magyar, look not upon thy ancestors,
 You, who in darkness cower, they are so bright.
 Magyar, look not upon them, for they shine
 With radiance that defies thy feeble sight.
 Illustrious visions from my country's past,
 Who oft of yore, like tempest swift and red,
 Shook Europe, and with valour proud and calm
 Saw at your feet her bent, dust-sunken head.
 Ah, great was the Hungarian in those days,¹³
 Great was his might and great his empery;
 North, east and south the realms of sea were his,
 Into his waves the stars sank from the sky.
 It was so long ago when laurels crowned
 Hungarian victors, that, although we float
 Upon imagination's eagle-wings,
 We scarce can reach a region so remote.
 So long ago those laurels withered were
 Upon Hungarian brows, one well might deem
 The story of the glory of those days
 To be a legend, or a baseless dream.
 'Tis years since I have wept, but lo, a drop
 Quivers upon my lashes: brethren, say,
 Is it the dew of twilight, or of dawn
 For Hungary, of coming night, or day?
 Oh, glory of my country, what wast thou?
 A soaring star robed in celestial light,
 That fell from heaven into the depths of earth,
 And quenched its radiance in eternal night?
 Or wast thou, glory of my fatherland,
 A blazing comet doomed to disappear
 For centuries, but that will flame again,
 When all the world shall look on it and fear!

SÁNDOR PETŐFI.

¹³ Under the reign of King Louis the Great, Hungary extended to the Baltic, Adriatic, and the Black Sea.

NATIONAL SONG.

Magyar, to arms! thy country calls!
'Tis now that thou must make thy choice
'Twixt servitude and liberty:
To chains or freedom give thy voice.
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

Till now we have in slavery been,
Our shame is theirs who gave us birth.
Those who in freedom lived and died
Rest not at peace in captive earth.
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

Shameless, despicable is he
Who now at death dismay doth feel,
To whom his wretched life may be
More precious than his country's weal.
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

The sword is brighter than the chain,
And fairer on the arm doth glow,
But yet in fetters we remain:
Oh, let us cast them from us now!
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

The name of Hungary will shine
With ancient radiance once again:
Though centuries have darkened it
'Tis we who will wipe off the stain.
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

Then, by our crumbling sepulchres,
Our children's children shall kneel down,
Our names held holy in their hearts,
Their blessings shall become our crown.
Unto the God of Hungary
We swear we will be free or die!

SÁNDOR PETŐFI.

THE HUNGARIAN NOBLE.

(A satire on the dandified and decadent aristocrats whose indifference to the wrongs of their country awoke the most bitter contempt of the patriotic poet.)

My ancestors' blood-rusted swords are hung
Fix'd on the wall, there mould'ring on high;
Blurred are the blades, but that is nought to me,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

Life is to me most sweet, and smoothly flows,
In idleness the lazy hours crawl by.
Labour is for the peasant, not for *me*,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

Serf, 'neath my chariot make the roadway smooth,
Let me no ruts or ridges there descry:
Upon the ground my foot I cannot set,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

Should I to learning bend my languid thoughts?
Nay, scholars starve, in misery they die.
I will not learn the art to read and write,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

But yet in one great art I do excel,
And my supremacy none can deny;
The art of eating and of drinking well,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

The yearly tax I do not have to pay,
And not extensive is my property:
In *debts*, however, I am passing rich,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

What care I for my suffering fatherland?
Hungary's woes will vanish by and by;
To serve her 'tis not I will lift a hand,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

When I have idly smoked my life away,
And shall in my ancestral castle die,
Angels will bear my soul to heaven straight,
For a Hungarian nobleman am I!

SÁNDOR PETŐFI.

JÓZSEF LÉVAY.

Born 1825. (Still living).

József Lévy (1825). Born at Sajószentpéter. During the Revolution he was a newspaper-correspondent, and later a teacher at the College of Miskolcz. Subsequently he became Notary and Sub-Commissioner of his province. He writes pensive, graceful poems, and is a successful translator of Burns.

KELEMEN.

(Kelemen Mikes was one of the faithful few who followed Francis Rákóczi II. to his exile in Turkey. Lévy has here attempted to depict the thoughts of the exiled poet.)

Alone I stand beside the voiceful surge,
 Upon the verge
Of the dark sea, whereon the wind doth chase
 In noisy race
The fleeting foam, as with a silver scourge.
Of all our exiles, upon Turkey's strand
 I alone stand,
If great Rákóczi's soul doth never come
 Forth from the tomb,
Blown with the storm that beats this alien land.
The autumn leaves are falling one by one,
 The birds are gone
From this far shore, - ah, whither then can I
 For refuge fly,
From the sad exile that I bear alone?
A pale star points to Zágony,¹⁴ on whose crest
 The snow-wreaths rest;
Beyond the mountains Transylvania lies,
 Whither spring flies
In all her pomp of bud and blossom drest.
And, like a gold-winged butterfly, my thought
 Those flowers hath sought,
On pinions of sweet memory; wherefore
 Unto that shore
Could not time bring me, that those blossoms brought?

¹⁴ The Poet's birth-place and home.

Oh, land where every tree and bush must be
Still dear to me,
How long wilt thou beneath the yoke remain,
And wear the chain
That makes thee hateful to the brave and free?
Ah, bitter is the bread of the Grand Turk,
And near me lurk
Spies who would wring pale treason from my breath,
And seal my death.
To listen and betray is their fell work.
A lonely tree am I, by lightning cleft,
Of strength bereft:
But yet perchance a purer, free-er air
Might still repair
The broken boughs by the destroyer left.
Alone I stand upon the sombre shore.
My heart is sore:
There of our exiles only I appear.
But, ah, I hear
Rákóczi's voice amid the tempest's roar!

JÓZSEF LÉVAY.

PÁL GYULAI.

Born 1826. Died 1909.

Pál Gyulai (1826-1909), was born at Kolozsvár. Beginning life as a journalist, he then became Secretary to a Hungarian nobleman, and subsequently, like Szász and Arany, a schoolmaster. As a professor at the University of Budapest, he was elected Secretary of the Academy, and a member of the Hungarian Upper House. Poet, novelist, and art-critic, his literary work is marked by exceptional grace and polish, and his prose is especially remarkable. Among his essays, one of the best is on Vörösmarty, and of his speeches, a panegyric on Arany is the best known.

A CRY IN DARKNESS.

In a deserted room, while shadows fall,
Three orphan children weep; the shrill winds rave
Outside: within the little voices call
Unto the Mother lying in her grave.

“Oh, Mother dearest. Mother dearest, come!
We are aweary - sing us lullaby -
Where are thou? dost forget us and thy home?”
Cleft is their pleading with a piteous sigh.

“Oh, Mother dearest, light the candle pray!”
Still through the storm their plaintive cry is heard,
And, in the chill, God's-acre, far away,
A new-made grave is slowly, softly, stirred.

The heavy clods asunder fall, and now
Into the blind, thick, darkness of the night,
Steals a pale shadow, and turns steadily
To where the children plead for love and light.

Her face is colourless, but her soft voice
Is all unchanged: her son and daughter know
They have no cause to fear - nay, they rejoice
And kisses rain on her cold cheek and brow.

She draws the quilt across the one that sleeps,
The others, in her arms, she doth enfold,
And lulls them into slumber: then she creeps
To see if all the house is as of old.

There, on the little bed, she sits until
All three are lost in dreams - then doth she go
About the chamber, setting each thing straight,
And folds their tiny garments in a row.

A hundred times her kisses fall upon
Their sleeping heads: the clock strikes, - the cock crows, -
A final, longing look, - then she is gone:
The grave that opened now doth slowly close.
Ah, much the grave doth cover heavily,
Sorrow and splendour, glory, hope, and gold,
But the sweet love a mother bears her child,
That, that alone, the grave can never hold.

PÁL GYULAI.

JÁNOS VAJDA.

Born 1827. Died 1897.

János Vajda (1827-1897), was born in Budapest, and educated there and at Székesfehérvár. Previous to the Revolution, he was a steward, or nobleman's agent, and subsequently served with the Austrian Forces in Italy. On quitting the Army, he made his home in Budapest, and devoted the rest of his life to literature. Despite the wealth and fire of his inspiration, there is a pessimistic note in much of his poetry, which has had a great influence on Hungarian letters.

AN AUTUMN REVERIE.

Cloud chases cloud athwart the sky,
The babbling foam curves round the coast,
The tall oak shakes it's locks on high,
As summer fades like a wan ghost;

The ravens whirl in sombre herds;
Upon the thorn-bush keenly blows
The wind, and chills the trembling birds,
Or through the dead leaves sobbing goes:

Now falls the leaf, now fades the rose;
Are we born for a fate like theirs?
Is this the sum of life? Who knows
What purpose rules our changing years!

Do we, with our weak breath expire,
Or cast our robes as on we wend?
Is death or life the victor here?
Does grave begin, or cradle end

The pageant of existence? Nay,
On which side of the frontier-line
Dwells the illusion, who can say,
Which is the true, who can divine!

Cloud chases cloud athwart the sky,
Upon the stubble strays the weed,
The vagrant flowering-chicory;
The forest now decays to seed,

And, as it waxes grim and bare,
The doves abandon their green bower.
The church-bell mourns to the chill air,
Despondent from its darkling tower.

Shadows on land, bubbles on sea,
From birth to death for ever pass;
The wind rends their pale shroud and we
Perish with them. Alas, alas!

Now fades the rose, now falls the leaf:
Should man have faith in anything?
The harvest of his hope is grief;
Doth yon grave blossom in the Spring?

The coffin in the earth is laid:
The falling clods repeat "For ever,"
Since those who sleep in that cool shade
Return to them that love them never.

The sun slopes down - the herds creep home,
The solemn bell dies on the ear;
The barn-owl shrieks, the bat flits past,
The mother sobs beside the bier.

But now the stars float o'er the sky,
The moon glides forth - and, voice of hope,
The wind sings o'er the Calvary -
"The leaf shall wake, the rose shall ope."

JÁNOS VAJDA.

KÁROLY SZÁSZ.

Born 1829. Died 1895.

Károly Szász (1829-1895), the son of a Professor at the College of Nagyenyed, was one of the most prolific and versatile of Hungarian poets. After fighting in the Revolution of 1848, he became a priest and country schoolmaster, and finally attained the dignity of an episcopal chair. A poet and a scholar, he translated the “Nibelungenlied,” several plays of Shakespeare, Dante’s “Divina Commedia,” lyrics by Goethe and Schiller, Tennyson’s “Idylls of the King,” and poems by Byron, Burns, Moore, Lamartine, Heine, Victor Hugo, etc.

IDUNA.¹⁵

(An elegy upon the death of the poet’s young wife, herself a poetess.)

Oh, wandering rumour, do not cull her name
To blow abroad in tardy, shallow fame:
Give her sweet sleep, oh, tranquil grave serene,
And you, calm, swaying grove, long shadows green.

Her life was never bent to the pursuit
Of fugitive renown - her gentle lute
Was never strung to woo that shadow pale:
She sang as simply as the nightingale.

And if, perchance, some passer-by should muse
Upon her song, or its soft echoes fuse
With the deep chorus of the concave plain,
How can she know her poem lives again?

Nay, leave her to the silence that is dear
To tired souls, and let no bitter tear
Save only mine, bedew the nameless stone
That keeps mute vigil over her alone.

No other flowers than nature here hath set
Shall tell her resting-place and my regret;
No other requiem than the sad lay
Of the lone nightingale at close of day.

Forget her, sons of men, and ah, green grove
Weave shadows o’er the grave of her I love;
Mar not her blessed slumber, vagrant fame;
Thou shalt not blow abroad her sacred name.

KÁROLY SZÁSZ.

¹⁵ The “*nom de plume*” of the subject of the poem.

KÁLMÁN TÓTH.

Born 1831. Died 1881.

Kálmán Tóth (1831-1881), was born at Baja, fought in the Revolution of 1848, and afterwards pursued a literary career in the capital. Member of Parliament, editor of several periodicals, Secretary of the Kisfaludy Society (a literary circle), and Member of the Academy, he is known best by his simple lyrics and songs of rustic love.

FORWARD!

The whole world echoes the sublime device
Of the old Guard, the Guard that nobly dies
But never will surrender. We had, too,
A motto that inspired our soldiers true:
Of death or of defeat it held no sign
But "Forward!" rang along the serried line.

With this bright word the maids of Hungary
Brodered the flags that sailed the purple sky,
With this word on his lips the boy took leave
Of her who next day for his death did grieve:
But if more sons were hers, that they might die
For glory, "Forward!" also was *her* cry.

Young, new-born army, ranged in firm array,
How was it formed and gathered? None can say.
Three centuries of valour might have pent
Less than to them a span of days hath lent.
Lo, they march forth; the enemy is veiled
In rolling fire; fiercely have they assailed.

Already half have fallen - clouds of smoke
Enfold and hide them in a sombre cloak.
Are they all dead? Nay, they march boldly on,
The youthful legions, and, ere they be gone
We hear unnumbered voices shake the sky
And "Forward!" still is their inspired cry.

As in a tempest, when the waves are hurled
Into one foaming phalanx, now the world
Is plunged in tumult - son and father fight -
The father falls - upon his fading sight
Appears his son's pale face - and for 'Good-bye'
At the last moment "Forward!" is his cry.

Oh, precious treasure, that so many graves
Could not engulf! Oh, word that mutely rings
Unconquered, where the voiceful forest waves,
And in true hearts, with glorious music sings!
Thou shalt arise with our dead heroes when
“Forward!” peals through the fatherland again.

KÁLMÁN TÓTH.

DEATH.

Nay, 'tis not death, though men do call it so,
When on the coffin-lid the hammer falls,
Nor when the hearse unto God's acre crawls,
And those who live lament in bitter woe.

Pleasure and pain, the phases of each day,
Are death and doomed to die when they are born.
In mourning them, it is ourselves we mourn;
While we yet live we are death's helpless prey.

Memory tells me of a child I knew
Long years ago, a boy with merry eyes,
Who danced and ran and chased the butterflies,
Or, for a sugar guerdon, dared to do

Actions of childish courage. Happy time!
Warmly he loved his Mother; he would meet
Her with a thousand kisses, at her feet
He played, or gently on her knee would climb.

That joyous child, by Heaven's stern decree
Was taken hence; ah, whither is he sped?
Into oblivion, for he is dead:
So must I answer, although I was he.

Later, I knew him as an ardent youth.
Ah, who again such love as his can feel?
Learning and gold he spurned beneath his heel,
For what but love to him was life and truth?

Ah, how he loved, ere his hour came to die.
'Tis he whom of them all I mourn the most:
Would that spring might restore his cherished ghost!
Nay, he can come no more; and he was I.

Thereto, there was a man whose heart beat fast
With sacred fires of love and hope and trust;
He deemed that men were true and fate was just,
That victory, though late, must come at last.

He, too, drank deep of poison, and is gone,
For life is only sordid dust and grime.
Why were his hopes o'er lofty for his time?
Death comes too speedily to such a one.

For, lo! we die, even as bubbles pour
In the swift river, as it cleaves the sedge,
Breaking and melting on the outer edge,
And taking divers forms of life once more.

Death is not only where the dead are laid.
I know it well, for though my hand and brain
Throb warmly, I have died oft and again;
Aye, more than this, I know, when all is said,
After this weary life of pain and love,
Death will itself but a transition prove.

KÁLMÁN TÓTH.