

THE HUNGARIAN CAPITAL

Hungarian hospitality is known throughout the world. The polite and warm welcome to strangers is characteristic of the Hungarian. More than 150 years ago the German traveller, Johann Lehmann, wrote: "I have less fear in travelling from Budapest to Szeged than from Würzburg to Frankfurt." Of the Hungarian capital he wrote: "I advise every traveller to stay in that town at least *one* day." One day! At that time the capital had only 13,000 inhabitants. What shall we say of Budapest to-day?

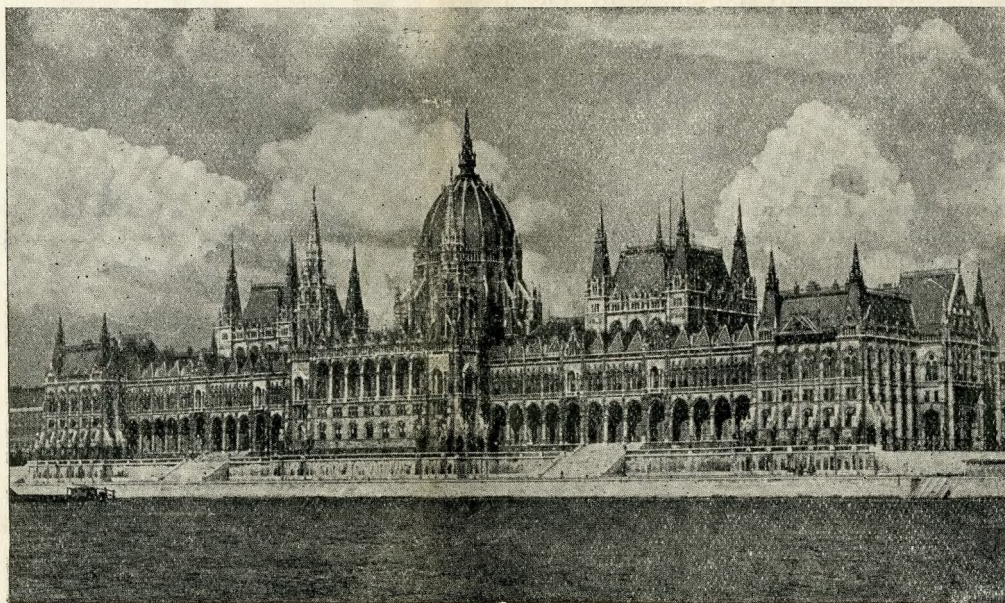
The most beautifully situated European capital is undoubtedly Budapest. Its history goes back into the dim past. There are many prehistoric remains in the vicinity; Akvinkum, near Budapest, is of Celtic origin. At a later period the town was extended by the Romans, who made it the fortification of the Danube.

The Romans disappeared from the district in the 4th century and their place was taken by the Slavs, who occupied the district until finally—more than 1,030 years ago—the Hungarians mastered the Danube and the whole country. The Tartar invasion (about 1250) wiped out the then existing culture, which must have been fairly rich, for the writer Rogerius, in describing "the warm fountains," and the town of Buda, then

chiefly inhabited by Germans, said "*in magna et ditissima Teutonica villa, quae Pesth dicitur.*"

After the expulsion of the Tartars, King Bela IV. built a fort by the Danube; the result was—thanks to the industrious German colonists—a town ever growing in prosperity, which it reached its height in the 4th century during the reign of King Matthias. But the Turks, when later they succeeded in capturing the town, destroyed everything, and drove the German colonists from the district. The Turks discovered the wonderful medicinal power of the springs of Buda and built several baths, some of which have been preserved to the present day. In the year 1686, the Hungarians, with the help of foreign troops, re-captured Buda.

The situation of Budapest is without parallel in the world; the town extends on both sides of the Danube, the two parts being joined by enormous bridges. The right side is situated on hills varying in height. Woods alternate with smiling valleys full of luxurious villas. In that part, right in the middle of the town, rises the Fortification Hill, crowned by the most beautiful Royal Palace in the world. On the Fortification Hill are many houses, some two or three centuries old, which preserve the character of the old architecture. The



THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE, BUDAPEST.

Church of the Coronation dates back 700 years (although it has been renovated), and is an example of pure Gothic style. Opposite the Fortification Hill the Gerhard Hill rises to a height of 750 feet, and on its top stand the ruins of the ancient citadel. At the foot of the hill are the warm fountains known as the Gerhard, Rac, Rudas and Hungaria baths.

The Buda woods are a favourite spot for walking and picnicking. If one arrives at the town by ship in the evening, the view is unforgettable. Thousands and thousands of lights shine on both sides of the Danube and the lights on the hills seem to be glittering from the skies.

On the left part of the town lies the apparently limitless Hungarian plain (Alföld); here are the big public buildings, the most notable of which is the Parliament House on the banks of the Danube itself. Imposing and elegant is the seven-kilometre long Andrassy Avenue, with its beautiful palaces. Here is the opera, the cradle of many world-famous musicians and singers. The highly-developed musical culture of the people of Budapest is worthy of note.

In addition to the Andrassy Avenue there are other imposing streets radiating from the centre of the town, for example, the Emperor Wilhelm Street, with its basilica in the Roman style, the Rákóci Street, with the National Theatre, and the Üllői Street, with the Arts and Crafts Museum. The boulevards, varying in size, with their interesting shops and fine palaces, are worthy of exploration.

The night life of Budapest offers many kinds of amusement, such as theatres, music halls, cinemas, dance halls, cafés with gipsy orchestras, etc.

One day is not enough now to see Budapest. He who wishes to explore the town, its picture galleries, the principal churches, the public buildings, the woods and hills of Buda and the old Royal Palace of Visegrad, will have to spend at least a week in this delightful town of Budapest.

Translated from the Esperanto

by B. M. NEWELL.

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