



# Budapestre vonatkozó újságcikk

Osztályozás

725.081

Szerző: .....

Cím: *Old Buda and new Budapest.*

Idő

1916

Forrás: .....

*The Continental Times*

Személy

*Berlin*

*1916. 7. 10.*

Helyszám

(Hely)

(Idő)

(Köt. v. füz.) (Oldal)

## OLD BUDA AND NEW BUDAPEST BEAUTIES OF HUNGARY'S CAPITAL

*By Cecile Tormay in the "Hungarian Review"*

Through the heart of the ancient Hungarian plain the great Danube rolls along, following the course of the legendary "Ister," and the divided lands meet again in the double capital of the country. Each city, Buda and Pest, expresses the character of the land on its side of the stream. Pest, down on the lowland, is formed out of the elements of the Prairie ("Abföld"), Buda up on the hill, as if out of the soul of the Vértes highlands . . .

Buda was once a fearsome, warlike fortress: the crowned helmet, the royal shield of the land, which with turrets and bastions was hammered out by a divine smith on the top of the hill under the free, blue sky of heaven. To-day the fort resembles a tamed citizen, living within the ancient walls . . . the hero of by-gone days.

Pest for several generations was the wide, bright coloured market-place of the country farmers and the sailors from the shores of the Danube. To-day a broad commercial centre, a basin for the currents of productive labour, — the chief market of Hungary.

The two cities reach out hands, in the form of beautiful bridges, to each other across the Danube, they have become one, yet each preserves its own peculiar old soul even in these modern times.

In olden times, in the days of armour, the chief city was Buda, in days of machines, factories and commercial wars, Pest has become the leader. Hers is the spirit of work . . . Buda's that of memories; memories going back to great times when Hungary's people did not lay down their arms during nearly a thousand years. Only the last fifty years have shown us what peace is—the peace of other happier peoples.

Again and again the country was overrun by hostile armies; the Hungarian race always beat them back. The then expelled and persecuted small Slav tribes,—the nationalities of Hungary of to-day—begged protection and shelter from the Magyars, the founders of the nation and owners of the territory, and found refuge here behind the trusty Hungarian arms—whose din and clash also resound through the world to-day.

### Modernity

In 1867 peace came to the land. But that peace resembled an over-quickly developed child, which, in fear of its early death, desires to live through everything, to do everything that the short span of its life allows. Such was the fifty years peace of Hungary after fighting for her independence for a thousand years. And in what the country has

created during this short period of half a century, one can trace the steps of both genius and childhood. Feverish desire to build up, rapid work, foresight and endeavours, failures and successes, unconquerable will, mistakes, splendid achievements . . . forward . . . forward! It was necessary to create in fifty short years a land of culture out of the battle-field of a thousand years.

Roads in a roadless country, railways in the wild mountains, harbours, ships to cross the ocean, bridges over uncontrolled rivers, Universities, Schools, Hospitals, Science, Art, benevolent institutions . . . a knowledge-seeking glance to the West . . . reclamations of swamps, afforestation work, opening of mines, factories, growing industry, the Iron Gate leading into the near East. . .

The smoke from the factories disperses under Buda on the Pest side; up on the hill the air is pure and still. Quietness prevails there among the old palaces and quaint little houses. In the old streets one hears the echo of one's footsteps, grass is growing peacefully between the stones. What happened here happened so long ago, that even the stories have withered since.

Many centuries ago golden-crowned, holy kings paced the meandering streets, and aureoled Hungarian princesses started from Buda across remote foreign lands towards the heaven of the saints . . .

Afterwards dark storm-clouds rolled over Hungary. Wild Mongolian tribes rode across

the plain towards Buda, and burned and destroyed it.

The dark clouds dispersed, the fortress of Buda was rebuilt. Centuries and dynasties came and went until a Magyar King Matthew Corvin, with the mighty power of his genius raised Buda again and put it in the centre of the world. . . The genius raises with himself the ground on which he stands!

King Matthew loved Buda, he crowned it with laurel and gold and endowed the people with privileges, but if for any reason he was angry with them he sent them a short proclamation from his palace:

"Matthew, by the Grace of God, King of Hungary.

Good morning, burghers! If all of you don't appear before the King you will lose your heads.

At Buda The King."

The wayward people obeyed and for a generation Buda was the centre of the world—the generation in which the destiny of Europe was decided. But only for one generation, for the length of the life of a king; then civil discords and Turkish wars reduced Buda to insignificance, into the dust clouds of the East.

### The Ruin of War

Everything went to ruin, and not a handful of stone remained on the summit of the mountain of Buda to recall the world-famous work of King Matthew. The bastions and balconies, the metal doors covered with gold, the porphyry staircases, the bronze torch-

bearers, the statues and the marble basins have all vanished without leaving a trace. Even the Library of which the King was so proud and which was then the largest in Europe. The stormy winds of the wars took every volume of that treasure to a different part of the world. Thus we find solitary Corvinus volumes in the museums of many foreign sovereigns and countries, like the solitary leaves of a tree that could tell stories of forests that had once existed.

Beginning with the unfortunate year 1541, for over a century and a half Turkish Pashas and Beys and not Hungarian kings ruled over Buda. The old citizens of Buda, all of whom were ennobled by King John and exempted from taxation, went out poor as beggars into the world. Turkish sentinels watched the country from the vaulted doors of the fort. Turkish soldiers loitered through the narrow streets and blind muezzins cried the morning call to Buda and Pest from the balconies of the minarets for a century and a half.

The endless chain of these hopeless Turkish mornings and those cheerless evenings rolled slowly over Buda and wore from the fortress the last vestige of glory. Moss and rust covered everything by the time the Christian troops of Charles of Lorraine recaptured Buda from the Turks and brought the promise of a new dawn.

Fearful and ragged the nobles of King John, the once proud citizens of Buda, returned one by one from distant lands. After them others came also: Hungarian officials, German merchants, fishermen, Servian journeymen, Slovanian masons. . . and the newcomers little knew of what had once been there, and the narrow zig-zag streets gradually forgot the Turkish times. With the exception of the minaret-like tower of the Guardian Church and the Turkish baths, nothing remained to remind one of that period.

### A New Era

The town slept in stillness until the era of Maria Theresia which touched the façades of the houses, put merry balconies on the sunny sides, curled graceful lines over doors and windows and began the building of

the present Royal Palace on the site of King Matthew's palace. Time still flowed on but the fortress of old Buda hardly noticed it. It only woke up a little when one day a bugle call rang out and behold: the first diligence rattled and jingled in through the old Vienna gate. Then dandies of Pest take the air in the streets of Buda in all the glory of their broad satin-silk cravats, coffee-brown, mother-of-pearl-buttoned frock-coats and tight cashmere pantaloons. These gentlemen look through their long-handled eyeglasses after the iris-coloured, muslin dresses and Egyptian shawls of the merry young ladies going for their afternoon coffee to the confectioners in Trinity Square. Herr Biedermeyer himself is going that way too, he has just arrived with the diligence from Vienna. He looks a little bourgeois, smiles good-humouredly and softly whistles to himself a waltz melody.

It is he who has taken a permanent lodging with everybody in Buda and, who knows?—perhaps he is living there to this day, although in the meantime Buda has gone through revolutions, bloody wars, storming of the fortress, Austrian domination, reconciliation with the king, and the great days of the Coronation.

Well, . . . even to-day in the houses of more than one inhabitant of the fortress the time of day is announced by a musical clock, whose charming tones overflow, like the odour of sweet lavender from an old wardrobe, through the windows into the street. But beyond St. Matthew's church, under the beautiful arches of the Fisher's Bastion one hears no longer the sounds of a musical clock. There one hears the breathing of a mighty lung; the Danube crowded with shipping, and beyond it, the breathing of Pest with its million of people.

The picture is majestic and the human vision may open its wings and hover over the great space. Like liquified greenish amber the Danube rolls towards the horizon, and Pest with its Parliament, Basilica and lines of houses stretching away to the blue distance, follows its course. The Citadel looks after it from the summit of the neighbouring Gellert Hill. In wintertime beautiful

white clouds, like veils, cling to the sides of this hill. Men walk indifferently through them and never notice this wonder of nature. The white veils of the Gellert Hill come forth from the bowels of the earth, from beneath the cold stream, and formerly legends were woven around them.

### The Age of Faërie

"Fires burn under the hill . . . ghosts and witches feed them. They boil water and dance around them in clothing of veils." It is in vain one tells those stories to the Budapest children of to-day; they know that

there are hot mineral springs under the hill, which will be once golden springs . . . hidden gold mines, unused sources of energy under the whole town which holds in her hands the keys of East and West with which till now she has only played.

It is not so long ago, since Budapest was a merry, laughing thoughtless metropolis, perhaps too many cafés—innumerable Gipsy bands—conspicuously beautiful women—noisy, crowded streets. Besides Hungarians there live here the Magyarized descendants of German settlers, Bulgarian gardeners, Poles, Bosnians, Jews, Slavonian labourers, Roumanians and Servians. A short time ago every individual dweller of the city lived, thought and felt according to his own individual fashion.

Then the hour struck . . . an hour in July 1914. In the brilliant summer sun of Budapest feverish hands posted the placards on the walls. Our aged King called his people to arms! This call thrilled the soul of the nation, and when they had read the Call,—then many-souled, multi-coloured Budapest became One, determined and powerful. And the whole country from the Carpathians to the Sea, like one man, unfolded the national flag.

This imposing and unanimous unfolding of the old flag was prepared in the spirit of the people, after a thousand years of suffering, by three great Hungarians in the last century,—by the genius of three statesmen and one royal woman—our Queen Elizabeth.

Count Stephen Széchényi, the prophet and

pioneer of culture; Francis Deák—the reconciler of King and People, and Count Julius Andrassy the creator of the unshakable and unbreakable alliance of Central Europe. Here in Pest—the city of the present—on the bank of the Danube stand their statues, while there in Buda—the city of the past—(such is the capriciousness of chance) are the three Hungarian leaders of to-day, working for the future of Hungary. Up near the Royal castle, in the Premier's palace, is the head of the Hungarian Government: Count Stephen Tisza, on the far end of the castle hill in the quiet little mansion in Verböcy street Count Albert Apponyi . . . at the foot of the hill, on the Danube bank, Count Julius Andrassy, the son of the great foreign minister.

Premier and leaders of the opposition,—separated by miles of political principles, are one in their deep love of country, one, because the race finds expression in each. Stephen Tisza expresses its hard determination, Julius Andrassy the pure, distinguished wisdom, while the words of the warm-hearted orator Count Albert Apponyi give expression to every hope of the Hungarian race.

In these great fateful times our leaders and peoples meet to decide finally the place of the representatives of Hungary among the people of Europe.

The nation which, in spite of a thousand years fighting, a century and a half of Turkish dominion, four hundred years of misunderstanding with its Kings, is able to exhibit such strength, may go calmly towards the new day evolved out of blood, sufferings and victories.

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