



Budapestre vonatkozó újságcikkek

Osztályozás

Tárgy

339.6

Hely

Idő

"1914"

Személy

Helyszám

Szerző:

Cím:

The language of ribbons

Forrás:

Daily Chronicle

London

1914 VI. 23

(Hely)

(Idő)

(Köt. v. füz.)

(Oldal)

THE LANGUAGE OF RIBBONS.

AT THE WOMAN'S CONGRESS IN BUDAPEST.

By MARY MORTIMER MAXWELL.

BUDAPEST, June 16.

If you came to Budapest just now, you would see walking about the city, waiting at the railway stations, and driving in carriages, many Hungarian ladies wearing bodices ornamented with ribbons of various colours. Some have only two or three ribbons, others have four, five, or six. I met a lady yesterday who had nine ribbons. That meant that she spoke, or at least understood, nine different languages, each colour representing one language.

There is what one might call a "language of ribbons" in Budapest. Those of us who were wise beforehand learned the signs before we arrived. I was, I am sorry to say, one of the unwise ones. That is why I got a well-merited reproof when I asked a young woman yesterday in the Suffrage Congress Hall if she spoke English. She replied, with the prettiest sort of an accent, "Oh, do you not see?" while somewhat proudly touching her red ribbon.

Bright red represents English, a heliotrope or lavender is German, a brilliant yellow means French, a pale blue is Italian, a brown means Danish, Dutch is a Nile green, and so on throughout all the colours and most nations of the earth. The great majority of the ladies who act

as guides and interpreters wear at least three colours, which shows that they speak three languages besides Hungarian. This latter is a language they do not expect any of their visitors to understand, and so they do not attempt to speak it to us.

Amongst the most charming women I have met are many of these Hungarians. When one of them was particularly kind in guiding me about the city yesterday I told her so, and she replied with a charming smile: "Is it not in English you say, 'Many a practice makes a perfect'?" Since one year now, when we have known the Suffrage Congress will meet here, we have made our minds to be very polite to you, so you shall go away and think how hospitable the Hungarians are, and many of us have learned English in this year just for your sakes from England and America. We could not have you go back to your great countries and say Hungarian ladies are ignorant, and would know not how to vote when once we get the suffrage!"

The Fashionable Language.

It is quite true that the English language will be fashionable henceforth in Budapest. Most well-born Hungarian girls are taught French and German, and some study English as well; but after this congress is over hundreds of little girls will be studying English where only a few studied it before. To be a suffragist will also be "the thing," although even now quite a number of smart Hungarian women have taken up the cause of votes for women. The local society here is known in Hungarian as the Feministák Egyesülete. Unlike the Austrian suffragists, the Hungarians are allowed to form women's political societies, and so they need not call their society a "committee." They have for their president the Countess Teleki, a most charming and vivacious woman, who, when she took me for a drive the

other day, was wearing four ribbons to denote that she spoke fluently four languages besides Hungarian, although when I had insisted upon knowing the full extent of her linguistic ability she modestly admitted that she did read and write in two other languages besides English, French, German and Italian, although she did not feel quite confident enough to wear the colours representing the Spanish and Roumanian languages in so far as speaking them was concerned!

There are several Hungarian countesses who are now working for the suffrage, and they do say that the Archduchess Augusta, granddaughter of the present Emperor and wife of the very popular Hungarian Archduke Josef, although she has not announced herself to be a suffragist, takes a great interest in the subject. On Sunday night, at the special performance which the Hungarian Royal Opera Company gave in honour of the congress, the Archduchess occupied the Royal box, surrounded by hundreds of suffragists from all over the world. Hungary's most noted actress, Mary Jászei, is prominent in suffrage work, as is also that beautiful actress, Erzsi Paulay, who speaks English so perfectly that she is about to go to America to fill an engagement there.

A Social Museum.

The Feministák Egyesülete is a society the members of which are interested in other causes than the suffrage, although every member of it is a suffragist. The chief political secretary, Mrs. Eugenie Meller-Miskolczy, has for some months been at work in a State institution which she explained to me would be called in English the Social Museum. It has for its object the teaching of the principles of hygiene, improvement in domestic and other work, the healthful rearing of children, showing workmen and workwomen by Kindergarten methods how much better it is to use good tools than poor ones, &c. Just now Mrs. Meller (or, as she would be called in Hungarian, "Mellerné," the addition of the "né"

denoting that she is married) is interested in the anti-fly campaign, which consists in teaching the more ignorant persons the great dangers of disease being carried by flies, and then shows them how practically to keep free from or get rid of the common house-pest.

The economic position of the Hungarian women is far in advance of many of the other European countries. A wife's inherited and earned income is her own, and not her husband's. When a wife dies intestate, her property is turned over to her children, if she has any. If she is childless, it goes to her relations, and not to her husband, although the property of a married man who dies without making a will cannot go to his relations if he leaves a wife or children. Divorce laws apply equally to men and women, although suffragists would like to have them reformed.

Two things of which Hungarian women most bitterly complain are, first, that a woman may not sign her name as a witness to any legal document; and, secondly, that she is not the legal guardian of her own children unless her husband so appoints her. There is the same complaint here as in England that "a mother is not a parent," and the doing away with this absurd position is one of the first things that will happen when Hungarian women get the vote.

"Looking Towards England."

Only a few months ago women teachers in the State or municipal school were paid upon precisely the same terms as men. The salaries were not high, and the men teachers asked for an increase in salaries. Then the educational authorities took part in that process which is known as robbing Peter to pay Paul, and they reduced the women's salaries in order to increase the men's. Therefore at present there is inequality of payment for equal work, and, as one Hungarian lady teacher expressed it to me, "We women teachers are not what you call mad one bit—not at all, not at all! Just

wait and see what we will do with Frauenstimmrecht!"

But when I have talked with Hungarian women about their desire for the suffrage, they have not given themselves over to reciting their wrongs. Rather do they speak quietly and somewhat determinedly about their rights and their intention of having them. They look longingly toward England, as do the women of most other Continental countries. "When you have votes in England, we shall get them here quite soon," said a wonderfully fascinating Hungarian woman to me this morning. She had invited me to her flat for luncheon, and I had taken her for a young married woman in the early twenties; yet at her table she introduced me to her four children, three girls and a boy, the latter 16, and her husband, a middle-aged Hungarian gentleman, who is a keen suffragist himself and a member of the Budapest Men's League for Woman Suffrage. When I first came to Budapest her little 12-year-old daughter had acted as guide to show me the way from my hotel to the church where Dr. Anna Shaw was to preach. The little girl wore only one ribbon, the heliotrope colour, showing that at present she felt herself competent to talk with strangers in but one language (German) other than her own; but she told me in German that she expected to be able to wear three ribbons next year, if her services were necessary as an interpreter.

One hears on every side expressions of amazement at the way this little band of Hungarian women have prepared for the most important women's congress the world has ever known. They have shown a real genius for organisation, while their kindness and hospitality will always be gratefully remembered by all of us. There seems no task too difficult for them to undertake if by doing it they can add to the comfort of their visitors. When at the great luncheon and dinner parties which they have prepared for us the waiters lose their heads and are too slow in attending to our wants, these women jump up and wait upon us themselves, bearing toward us knives, forks, plates, vegetables, and the bottles of mineral waters for which Hungary is noted. When I reproached a high-born lady for fetching and carrying for me this morning, her smiling reply was, "It is good for hospitality and for our propaganda!" And so I suppose it is.
