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THE
THE LIFE

OF

COUNT LOUIS BATTYÁNYI

THE HERO,

Prime Minister of Hungary in 1848,

WHO WAS ORDERED BY THE AUSTRIAN GENERAL HAYNAU
TO BE EXECUTED AND WAS SHOT IN PESTH (HUNGARY)
OCTOBER 6th, 1849.

AND THE LIFE OF

GENERAL ARTHUR GÖRGEY,

THE TRAITOR OF HUNGARY IN 1849.

BY

A LATE OFFICER OF THE HUNGARIAN ARMY

UNDER GENERAL BEM IN TRANSYLVANIA.

NEW-YORK, 1858.

G. B. TEUBNER, PRINTER, 17 ANN STREET.



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INTRODUCTION.

By bringing before the American public the two following biographical sketches, our intention is merely to keep alive the generous interest these United States have displayed in the struggle of a heroic nation.

We selected two almost opposite characters, the one brought up in the greatest luxury, neglected in education and possessing all the faults of youth, yet dying a *hero* ; the other receiving with smaller means an excellent education, showing when a mere youth the austerity of a philosopher, despising the showiness of grandeur, yet possessed of an ambition seldom equalled, leaving the scene of public action a traitor !

There are traits in both characters, which call forth the admiration of the reader. Though we may find faults in Count Louis Batthyányi, when young, they are more than overbalanced in him when in manhood, but it must be said in truth that Görgey's character, when young, should be the envy of all,—as man we admire him, before his downfall, and wonder how one so gifted could become what the whole world believes him now to be.

Though circumstances have had their share in the true development of both men's characters, it cannot be denied that they both prove that the *axioma* there is no foretelling ect, can here decidedly be applied.

May our readers read with pleasure, may they find instruction in the sketches and may our hope be realized that the suffering Hungarians are not entirely forgotten in their present state of oppression and exile.

“ For the century is big with fate,
And will bring forth famous days, I veen
When we must stand for life and death,
Then clasp we hand in hand, around,
That we may not quail, when the future grim
With giant forms shall threaten us.”

ALEX. PETÖFY.

COUNT LOUIS BATTHYÁNYI,

Prime Minister of Hungary in 1848.

Sentenced by the AUSTRIAN GENERAL HAYNAU and shot in PESTH, HUNGARY,

OCTOBER 6th, 1849.

A few days after the close of the Diet of Pozsony (Pressburg), in 1848, the new Hungarian ministry made its entrance in Pesth, where it was received with great pomp and solemnity, and an extraordinary exultation by the people, for the men of whom it had been composed at the suggestion of Count Louis Batthyányi were all, to a greater or less extent, the favorites of the people.

Count Louis Batthyányi, the prime minister of Hungary, was a member of one of the oldest and noblest families in the country. Rich in all the qualities which conciliate affection, possessed of large property, endowed with beauty of body and activity of mind, graceful manners and that loftiness in gait, word and motion which is imposing without being offensive, he had been for years connected with the Hungarian opposition. The high influence he exercised through his immense possessions, by his being the head of one of the first families in the country, that of the Counts Batthyányi of Német Ujvár, through his near relationship with almost all the important families of Hungarian counts

and princes and as the superior count of the county of Vasvár-megye, all this combined, assured to him at once a prominent position in any party to which he might choose to attach himself.

Neglected in early youth by his father who, in spite of nobility and riches, did not manage to attain any higher rank in the Austrian army than that of captain, committed afterwards to the charge of a careless, unprincipled mother, the education of the boy, who betrayed occasionally a great deal of extraordinary mental faculties, was sadly defective.

Later when the child by his unmanageable character began to be a burden to his mother, he was sent to Vienna and intrusted to the special care of the ecclesiastical professors of a gymnasium of that city whose bigotry and pedantry not only failed to satisfy the boy's natural vivacity, but infected him with a downright disgust for everything that went by the name of science. Arrogant as he had learned to be on his father's estate, surrounded by servants and lackeys, obstinate and self-willed and yet coxed and flattered by his teachers, on account of the rich presents which these reverend gentlemen received from his mother, he left the school and entered the Austrian army without justifying as yet any extraordinary hopes as to his future career.

His good genius placed the young officer in garrison in Venice, where his young spirit seemed suddenly to open to the influences of art; and the young count, who had hitherto exhibited only the character of an extravagant bon vivant, suddenly turned, of his own impulse, to serious studies. What had been neglected in boyhood was now rapidly made up by force of natural ability. Languages, art, natural science, but above all political economy were the material of the studies with which he occupied the otherwise tedious hours of garrison life. His private circumstances too felt the influence of the new direction thus given to his mind. The extravagance of his mother had gone so far that the at first liberal remittances from home began to come more sparingly. Through the generous style of living which he had at first adopted in Italy, as also by gambling and other indulgences, he had consumed large sums of money and had fallen into the hands of usurers, whom the young noble, while yet in his minority, had to

stave off with notes of hand, payable on his coming of age. His serious studies led him to reflect on his peculiar position, and the extravagant officer was suddenly transformed into a good economist. As such he determined to put an end to the wastefulness of his mother, procure himself to be declared of age and to undertake the management of his own property. He caused all his notes of hand in Italy and Vienna to be declared void, as created by a minor, a proceeding against all equity and inconsistent with the Count's otherwise honorable character. He assigned to his mother a widow's residence with a not very heavy income and returning to his estates in Hungary entered upon the management of them for himself. Soon after his return in 1834, he married the Countess Antonia Zichy, daughter of the rich Count Charles Zichy, thereby materially increasing his property, as the dowry of his wife was estimated at seven millions guilders (\$3,500,000). As early as 1840 we find the name of Count L. Batthyányi connected with all great national enterprises and reckoned among the leaders of the pure Magyar party. He appears to have taken for his model the noble patriot Count Stephen Szechenyi and labored in concert with him and with his own cousin Count Casimir Batthyányi*) for the material prosperity of the country. We see him already in 1842 upon the benches of the Hungarian opposition, although he was not at the time in a position to attract much public notice as a politician, as he was deficient in talent as a speaker and not provided with that store of information which won for Count Szechenyi, for example, universal respect. Being thus deficient in oratorical powers, Louis Batthyányi, for this reason principally, attached himself at the last Diet but one, to Louis Kossuth, depending on the latter for his own want of speech, while on the other hand he added to the dignity of Kossuth by his (the Count's) immense influence. Well known and reputed as he was as the lion of the court, where the Archduchess Sophia was one of the many enthusiastic admirers of the "handsomest of the handsome Hungarian magnates," a personal friend of the Palatine Archduke Stephen, a zealous Magyar and prominent member of the opposition, Count L. Batthyányi could not fail to find

* Count Casimir Batthyányi died an exile in Paris in 1856.

a place in the new Hungarian ministry. He was destined by the King and the Palatine to the office of Premier, partly on account of high birth and influence and partly because his political views, though openly in favor of the Hungarian opposition, had yet in many respects a certain conservative, aristocratic tone and fitted him best for the part of mediator between the conservative and radical parties, the more so as L. Batthyányi was with Count Stephen Szechényi, Baron Joseph Eotveos and Francis Déák considered by the popular belief to belong to the extreme right of the Hungarian opposition. As minister Count L. Batthyányi might have been of incalculable service to his country had he possessed that large measure of statesmanlike prudence, which distinguished, for instance, Francis Déák, or had he been endowed with the geniality and energy of Kossuth. He was not deficient in self devotion, pure will or even laudable ambition ; but mediating characters like Batthyányi, in such distracting revolutions as that of Hungary was destined to be, are generally sacrificed without doing their country as much service as with a greater degree of energy and determination might have been expected of them. L. Batthyányi, however noble and honorable as a man among his fellow men, had yet drawn in with his mother's milk, too much aristocratic feeling to venture boldly into the whirlpool of an actually popular movement. He was admirable as the representative of a party which negotiates, but little fitted to be the leader of a party which must and will act. Batthyányi at the last Pressburg Diet was once more the lion of the court of Hungary, and the sacrifice he offered by his vote on the Bill for Disencumbering Landed Estates, was not less important than that of the French nobleman, who on the night of August 4th, 1789, in a glow of patriotic inspiration, after hearing the thunders of Mirabeau, declared himself ready to sacrifice all his feudal revenues to the amount of more than a million and a half of francs. Count Louis, as he generally was called in Hungary, did not, it is sure, speak the Hungarian language fluently, but was acquainted with her literature and the western European culture enough, to make up for the mechanical difficulties of the language by a very clear understanding and an accurate knowledge of

national affairs. His speeches were never long, but always full of matter and went straight to the mark without adornment of phraseology. The flowery style, which in accordance with the national character, was much affected by the Hungarian orators, the nicety of expression, the cunning of taking advantage of momentary circumstances, in short all the artificial weapons of parliamentary debate, were things which he entirely neglected. He always spoke right out and said what he had to say and what he thought. His convictions were deep and he never shrunk from expressing them even in the most dangerous movements; the almost bald head, the long, full beard which flowed around his chin, the strikingly high and broad forehead, the thoroughly noble and handsome features and the deep seriousness of his pale countenance, made on every assembly where he appeared, so strong and deep an impression, that even his opponents bowed before him in respectful silence. With all these qualities he seemed created by nature to be the head of the aristocratic party in the Hungarian opposition.

A mournful interest is attached to Count Louis Batthyányi's history, for he was the most illustrious victim of the infamous Haynau who, however, acted only according to the orders he had received from Vienna, where the Count was an object of special hatred to a certain personage for reasons which have contributed to cause so many tragedies in the course of human affairs, and which ostensibly have nothing to do with the great games of life, though affecting them to an extent scarcely credible to an inexperienced person. "Pour qui les connaît," says a celebrated Frenchman, "les sentiers valent mieux que les grandes routes," and it is certain that those who desire to know the real causes of some of the most important political events, must pass out of the grand highways of history into its byways and even into its remotest footpaths, pushing through brambles and briars and bush and perhaps get thoroughly lacerated in the course of their researches after truth, which like all other valuable things is to be had only through labor and pain. The causes of the sufferings of Maria Stuart and of her judicial murder were altogether of a personal nature, and the political reasons which are assigned to

them were of a secondary importance, hardly indeed rising even to that rank. So it was with the execution of Count L. Batthyányi, whose condemnation was effected through the aid of a tribunal, which, as Max Schlesinger says, has been considered by all the lawyers of Europe, as incompetent legally to try him. The Austrian government did not dare to send him before a competent court, for he had not been guilty of any crime even according to the ideas of the bureaucracy of Vienna ; but as his murder had been resolved upon for private reasons, by one who never forgives a real or supposed wrong or *slight*, and who unfortunately was then all powerful in the empire, he was condemned, sent before a court martial and by that body, after a farce, nicknamed a trial, sentenced to the gallows. To escape so ignominious a mode of death, which has ever been repugnant to men in all degrees of society, Count Louis endeavored to commit suicide, but only so far succeeded as to wound himself in the neck and became thus situated like Wolfe Tone, after he fell into the hands of the Irish government sixty odd years ago. This wound, however, answered his purpose, as it was impossible to hang him with some of the veins of his neck open, without perpetrating an act of horror and cruelty which could not have failed to raise a storm, even in Austria, and although a scoundrelly surgeon pronounced that he could be hung, in opposition to all his brethren of the profession, the commander at Pesth was not so cruel as to carry out the sentence literally. He was to have been hung in the morning, but was shot in the evening of the 6th of October 1849.

“At the time appointed,” says General Klapka, “the doors of the prison were thrown open and Count Louis Batthyányi left his cell leaning on the arm of the chaplain of his friend Count Stephen Károlyi. He was weak with the loss of blood, but his face was serene, his bearing majestic ; his eyes were bound up, he raised his hand and with his last words—*ELJEN A HAZA!*—God bless the country, rung the report of three rifles and Louis Batthyányi had ceased to breathe. He died as he lived, calm, majestic and innocent, worshipped by his nation, respected by the world and leaving his assassins to the just detestation of posterity. His

execution has been compared to that of Count Egmont, now so familiar with all readers from the recent works of Prescott and Motley, but Batthyányi was a greater, a better man than the victor of the St. Quentin and Gravelines. On the same day that he died, Haynau not satisfied with this result, summoned a third court martial, which showed a servility to the government beyond all precedent. On this memorable day the following men were tried besides, condemned and died on the gallows :—*Charles Vecsey, Count Charles Leiningen*, the Generals *Lewis Aulich, Jgnaz Török, Ernest Pöltenberg* of Pölt, *Joseph Nagy Sándor, Charles Knezies*, and the valiant *Damjanics*. The following were shot :—*Ernest Kiss, Joseph Schweidel, William Lázár* and *Aristides Dersöffy*. *Damjanics* was the last to be executed ; as he walked under the gallows with his wooden leg, he exclaimed : “ It is wonderful, always the first in the battle, I am the last to be hung.”

To the same ignominious death the following were condemned : Prince *Wincelaw Woroniczky*, a young man twenty-five years of age, General *Lewis Kaczinsky, Peter Giron*, commander of the German legion, *Charles Abancourt*, adjutant of General *Dembinsky, Perényi* an old venerable man of considerable political influence, *Cernyus*, State Minister, *Emerich Szacs vay*, who signed the Declaration of Independence, *John von Jeszenak*, Commissioner of the government in Slovakia and the celebrated *Csányi*. The latter died with the greatest firmness ; he put the rope round his neck himself and said to the executioner, “ Now I am ready, do your work.”

Thus died these men for trying to free their poetical and beautiful country of the tyranny of the most tyrannical of the governments of Europe. They were and are admired by the whole world for their longing for liberty.

Many who had the good fortune to escape their enemies fled to Turkey and were received with hospitality. The Austrian government left nothing undone to have them delivered up, but the Emperor of Turkey had honor enough not to yield, and England sustained him in this noble opposition. At first 3,000 Hungarian refugees found their way to Widdin in Turkey, 2,000 of

them returned afterwards to Hungary on being assured of a general pardon by General Hauslab. A few of the remaining embraced the Islam in order to be protected from further prosecution by the Austrian government, but the largest number, amongst them Kossuth, were sent to the fortress of Schumla, from where he and some others were brought to the United States, by the noble action of the general government.

This was the ultimate fate of those heroes in the Hungarian struggle for liberty. Thousands and hundreds of thousands fell on the battle field, and about 50,000 are still incorporated in the Austrian army. The most educated and most intelligent of the Hungarian population were cruelly murdered, all those who wished freedom endure slavery and have to suffer of ill treatment of the Austrian soldiery. Flourishing villages and most of the formerly magnificent villas of Hungarian noblemen are destroyed, and their ruins are the image of the present state of the country, a ruin which may be considered the forerunner to the final fall down of the Austrian empire, as Hungary, by the production of its rich soil and its wealth, sustained and upheld the Austrian government so far.

That 6th of October 1849 is the darkest day in the history of the house of Austria, since the one on which the patriots of Bohemia were butchered at Prague, seven generations ago.

GENERAL ARTHUR GÖRGEY.
THE TRAITOR OF HUNGARY.

This man who was to play such an important role in the new Hungarian history, was the son of a small Magyar proprietor in the comitate of Szepes, where his ancestors and parents owned the ancestral castle of Zoparty. Born in 1818, he had subsequently at that time (the commencement of his public career in 1848) scarcely reached the age of thirty. His father, a highly educated nobleman, had four sons, the eldest of whom, Guido, an excellent miner and zealous Magyar, had required some reputation in the mountain cities; the second was Armin, who later distinguished himself as Honvéd Major in the comitate of Szeps; the third was Arthur, and the fourth and youngest, Stephen, who, under the upper command of Arthur, was soon promoted to the rank of captain. The mother was a highly cultivated lady, descending from one of the oldest families of the country; she conducted the education of her children exclusively herself, the hardening of the body, strict obedience and a kind of military discipline were her chief aim, imparting thereby to all her children that stoical, severe austerity of character, by which Arthur as well as the two older brothers distinguished themselves. Even the aristocratic mind of the mother seems to have been implanted into her sons. She died in early life, when Arthur was scarcely ten years old, while her husband followed her in the grave a few years later. Arthur, then received his first scholastic education in the latin classes in Késmárk and Leitshaw; later he entered the Evangelical College of Eperjes, where Kossuth and Pulsky had

studied likewise, but quitted this college very soon, to be admitted to the Pioneer School at Tulln, for to become a soldier had always been the most ardent desire of his heart. The officers and professors of the military academy of Tulln soon had occasion to observe the prominent talent of young Görgey ; in two years he completed a course of three years, and his teachers recommended, at the expiration of his term, the young man then hardly seventeen years old, to the Court Counsellor-of-War in Vienna, with the addition that in their opinion he could be expected to become "once an eminent general." In like manner the professors wrote to his father, some of which letters are still among the family papers, " that the institution, since its existence, never had such a distinguished pupil.

Görgey went from Tulln to Vienna, where through the special recommendation of his teachers, he was admitted into the guard of Hungarian nobles. There also, he distinguished himself from amongst his comrades, by something like an extraordinary *measured* austerity, by a strong love for order, by his dislike for the unorderedly conduct, for which this guard had acquired a certain fame in Vienna, and at last by a peculiar inclination towards the study of practical sciences. Botany, the veterinary art and chemistry were his favorite studies. After five years of service, he was promoted to the rank of first lieutenant of the Palatinal hussars, but quitted soon that military career and went to Prague, where he studied under Professor Reichenbacher. After having finished his course he married a French lady, who up to the time of his marriage was governess in the family of a banker of Prague and returned with his young wife to the comitate of Szepes, where he had a small property, inherited of an uncle, in the neighborhood of his birth place. The month of March of the year 1848 woke him up out of his rural seclusion and in April we find him already in Pesth, offering his services to the Hungarian ministry. Kossuth who understood with a penetrating eye how to select his men took Görgey unto him. At first he inclined to put Görgey, on account of his chemical knowledge, at the head of the mint office, but he soon changed his mind and sent him to Liege, (Belgium), to purchase arms for the Hungarian govern-

ment. On his return he was made captain in Györ (Raab), then major in Szolnok, after that major of two bataillons in Pesth; in this capacity he was sent to the island of Csepel, in order to hinder the Croations from passing the Danube, and as of President of the Council of War at that island to cause Count Odön Zichy to be hung. He shortly afterwards joined Perczel in his operations against the army corps of Roth, and became in fact the leading soul of them. Promoted to the rank of colonel, he took part, under the command of Moga, in the battles of Schwechat and carried his nomination to the rank of General in-Chief already in his pocket, when Moga crossed the Leitha. Kossuth had sent him this nomination in the name of the Committee for the defence of the country secretly, because he mistrusted Moga. But it was only after the latter had crossed the Leitha that Görgey took command of the whole.

It is not our intention to speak in this biographical sketch of all the battles and military exploits in which he was engaged. We will limit ourselves to the man as man and therefore give only a few traits of his character, tending perhaps to throw some light on the problematical demeanor of this great general.

Görgey himself was never aware of possessing great strategical capabilities; like many other great men he believed that in his secondary capacity, viz : in his chemical knowledge lay the means by which he could and ought to excel. For this reason he did not offer at once his services to the Secretary-of-War, although he was educated in the theory and practice of military tactics, but tried to put his activity and capability to the test in another field. His favorite thought was to be nominated to the chair of Professor of Chemistry at the national university of Pesth. "When the war is terminated," so he afterwards expressed himself at the time he was already a general, "and we have come out victors, the country ought to show her gratitude by giving me 50,000 guilders for the construction of a chemical laboratory; for with that amount at my disposition there could be done things in the department of chemistry which till now have been considered impossible by many." Striking is in this regard, therefore, that when later banished to

Klagenfurt, his first public activity was displayed in giving lectures on the different methods of illumination. Once, when Kossuth, in order to secure his future, sent him a check for the large amount 200,000 guilders, which he, in order not to offend Görgey, had deposited in the name of the latter's wife, he returned the same, with the words. "If I fall, I want no money for myself and my wife becomes again a governess as before: if we are conquered and escape, I become Professor in some foreign country; and if we conquer and I outlive the victory, then I want no money sent to me at present." However courteous he was to his inferiors, he was proud against his superiors. A deep rooted contempt for man made him devoid of feeling for the fate of the same, and though he showed great humanity towards the enemy, this was less an impulse of the heart than prudence and sagacity. He could not understand why one could hate an enemy, all that was required was to combat and subdue him, inhumanity was only the result of a paltry hatred. When he caused the young Count Zichy to be hung, he stood quietly at the side of the murderous machine, remarking to some one near by: "Is it not a great luxury, that three pieces of wood are required to build a gibbet!" When the execution was over, he said, after a long interval of silence: "Yes, yes, it was necessity and the example will profit." He always laughed at Maurice Perczel, principally at the latter's extravagance of words and noisy activity, and sometimes Görgey drew Perczel's attention to the latter's foibles in the most unsparing manner. While almost every man in Hungary bowed for the greatness of Kossuth, he always remained cold and seemingly indifferent towards the same. The most beautiful speeches of Kossuth did not draw from him one enthusiastic *Elyen* or applause; where others found great depth of thought, he only saw phrases, and that which most considered a sublime spectacle appeared to him as only a comedy. It was exactly this indifference towards Kossuth which produced in the latter, who had almost none but admirers and many flatterers around him, a higher esteem for Görgey. Görgey looked upon man and events as he would look upon the result of a chemical analysis; with him it was nothing but calculation and cold

matter; he therefore remained cool in all circumstances, indifferent alike to success and failure. That he had a quick eye to overlook the bearing and foresee the consequences of a cause, proves the following: In the month of May 1849, he received the orders of the Diet to take Buda (Ofen), when he suddenly exclaimed: "Hungary is lost now," he had namely overlooked in a few moments the whole extent and bearing of this order. In relation to his political opinions, Görgey has very seldom made expressions which could characterize him. Certain it is that he was a thorough Royalist, less certain that he was an aristocrat by principle. After the victory at Vátz (Waitzen), he said to one of his friends, the General Gáspár, "I will not inform the Diet at Debreczen (Debreczin), of this victory, for these fools would be able to declare the Independence." In the same manner he talked everywhere with scorn and derision, sometimes even with much cynicalness, about men as well as about events. There was only one man among the leaders of the Hungarian revolution of whom he never expressed a word of blame, viz: General J. Bem. When already the whole population of Hungary had given up the last attachment to the dynasty of the Hapsburgs, Görgey declared in a proclamation to the army, "that he fought against the Emperor Francis Joseph, for the rightful King of Hungary, Ferdinand the V, and in this respect he went hand in hand with Paul Nyári." On the battle ground he found himself in his real element; he never wore the uniform of a general; he even went so far as to refuse with scorn, considering it nonsense, the title of Field Marshal, and the cross of military Savory, 1st class, adding full of irony, that these things were inconsistent with a Republic. In the camp as well as in battle, he only wore the simple uniform of major, and often did not change his clothes and boots in his campaigns for a fortnight. His hair was cut short and still he generally wore only a cap with a small front shade, so that his face was much burnt by the sun. In the service he was severe and unforbearing; he worked till late in the night and then took often a horse to inspect personally the extreme vanguards, and at four o'clock in the morning he rose again. All his army orders and bulletins,

which were distinguished by clearness and precision, were written in the German language ; he even commanded in that tongue, of which not a few Magyars took offence. Already when major, his attention being called to this habit, he replied : “ I write and speak what I and my people understand best ; the German command is understood by every body in Hungary, the Magyar by few ; these are national weaknesses.” As a thorough practical man, he hated even hypercriticism, and was in the habit of laughing heartily when a German officer presented himself to him with a Magyarized name.

To go here into the details of the different causes which are supposed to have made of such an eminent and talented man “ a traitor ” would not only be too long but tedious, because they are many, and though it is a historical fact, that he is considered generally a traitor, still as the Austrian government, whose close prisoner he is at Klagenfurt, with the only permission to walk without restraint within the city limits, never allowed him to say or write a word in his defence and as his treason has never brought him any great honor or wealth, we prefer to leave the decision of this delicate point to history. We all know the fatal result of the act.

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