

HUNGARY'S FIGHT FOR NATIONAL EXISTENCE

OR

THE HISTORY OF THE GREAT UPRISING
LED BY FRANCIS RAKOCZI II.

1703-1711

BY

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PREFACE BY
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It is well for the English-speaking world to get a better perspective of history than it is possible to get without a far more thorough knowledge of the history of Central and Eastern Europe than can be obtained without such books as this, which we owe to the erudition and the profound and faithful study and the patriotic feeling of Baron von Hengelmüller. The ordinary English or American student, for instance, is absolutely ignorant that during the middle years of the seventeenth century, when in his eyes Cromwell was the one figure in Europe, the Eastern third of Europe, all Slavonic Europe, was shaken to its foundations by the Cossack uprising of Khmielnitski against the Poles, an event of incalculable consequence to the after-time history of Poland and Russia. To the dwellers in the forests, the steppes, and the marshy plains between the Carpathians and the Urals, the Baltic and the Black Sea, Khmielnitski's feats and fate were of more consequence than Cromwell's. In the same way the average Englishman or American, to whom Marlborough is one of the leading figures

of all time, is absolutely ignorant of the far-reaching part played during the years that were most eventful in Marlborough's career by the great Hungarian national leader whose life-work is described in this volume.

No European people has a history more striking and interesting than that of Hungary. When in the ninth century the wild Magyar horsemen burst from the Volgan Steppes into Middle Europe, there was nothing to indicate that their history would differ from that of the Avars who had preceded them, or the Cumans who came after them. They were a non-Aryan Asiatic race of pastoral nomads, and the flood of their invasion in its first effects upon Europe was similar to the many invasions of Finnish, Turkish, and Mongol tribes, which lasted from the time of the Hun till the time of the Ottoman. For a century or over the Magyars appeared merely as devastating hordes, who seated themselves on the necks of the Slavs, who rode across Italy and up the Rhone, and before whom the Germans cowered in terror. The victories of Otto and Henry the Fowler freed the Germans from Magyar supremacy, and the Magyars then proceeded to settle down in the countries they had won, and to organize a permanent society of the European type. The conversion of the people to Christianity in its Latin form, and the adoption of what was substantially the feudal form of government, immediately changed Hungary into a member

of the international world which centred around the Pope, and to a less degree around the Kaiser, as representing their ideals of Church and State. The governmental growth of Hungary offers unlimited possibilities of interest to the student. The famous Golden Bull, the charter of Hungarian liberties, is a document of almost as much interest as the great charter signed at Runnymede at about the same time. The transformation of the Magyars from wild and heathen Asiatic nomads into the magnates and warriors of a European kingdom wedded to a European polity had, among its other results, the establishment of Hungary as a bulwark against further Asiatic invasion of Europe. When the Mongols trampled the Slavonic peoples under their horses' hoofs, and overthrew the knighthood of Germany in Silesia, they also conquered Hungary and spent their last aggressive strength in the effort. Later, for a couple of centuries, Hungary stood as the barrier between Central Europe and the Turk—and scant was the gratitude it received from Central Europe in return. Finally, early in the sixteenth century, at the fatal battle of Mohacz, Hungarian liberty was lost and the Turk reigned supreme until the days of the great commander, Eugene of Savoy.

The Austrian steadily warred to drive the Turk from Hungary. Unfortunately this warfare was carried on so purely for the aggrandizement of Austria itself that the Hungarian was perplexed

to know whether the Turk or the German was his most dangerous foe and his hardest taskmaster. To racial was added in many cases religious antagonism. The South German was a Catholic, and many of the Hungarians were Protestants, the Protestant Magyars being Calvinists, while the Protestants among the Slavs who followed the Magyar lead were generally Lutherans. Very often the leading Hungarian patriots were thrown into the arms of the Turks, the enemies of Christendom, by the narrow and repressive policy of which they were the victims; and therefore very often they were of the highest usefulness to Austria's enemies, whether at Constantinople or Paris.

The great career of Rakoczi took place during the years when England, Austria, and Holland had united to curb the domineering ambition of the great monarch, Louis the Fourteenth of France. Rakoczi's revolt was therefore a matter of the gravest concern to the cabinet of London no less than of the cabinet of Vienna. His struggle ended at the moment in military defeat, yet he won for his nation a political recognition which was of vital consequence to Hungary in the future. All wise and far-seeing men earnestly hope for the continuation of the Dual Empire, the Empire Kingdom in which the same man is Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary. All need for bitterness between Hungary and Austria has passed, and the bitterness will surely vanish if the statesmen

and people of the two nations will but work together in a spirit of mutual respect and hearty goodwill one to the other. There is no need of dwelling upon the past with any purpose save to pay a just meed of tribute to valour and sagacity, and to furnish lessons by which the statesmen of the present can profit. This is the spirit in which Baron von Hengelmüller has written. He has a great theme; he is writing of a great man and a great people, at a time when the life of the man marked a crisis in the life of the people. He is peculiarly fit to lay this history before the English-speaking public, for he is thoroughly acquainted with the habits of thought both of the Englishman and the American, and his long experience as Austrian Ambassador at Washington has qualified him to understand the people whose interests he desires to attract in a way that is given to but few men of Continental Europe. He has written a book of far-reaching historical importance, and one that should peculiarly appeal to every cultivated man among the English-speaking peoples.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.