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One Hundredth Anniversary of Kölcsey's Hymnus
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ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF KÖLCSEY'S HYMNUS

BY

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The Hymnus' of Kölcsey, the centenary of which is being celebrated this month, is one of the most reverently pacific of national anthems. The French "Marseillaise", Germany's "Die Wacht am Rhein" and the American "Star-Spangled Banner" all breathe the blood-quickening air of war or revolution. "Rule Britannia" and "Deutschland über alles" are turgid with national pride. "God save the King" and "Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser" bespeak devotion to a monarch. But the Hungarian "Hymnus" is a humble prayer to God on behalf of an unfortunate nation. With reverence it accepts the chastisement imposed by God in the past, but it implores him, out of the depths of the country's sorrow, to bring comfort and healing to an unhappy people. I can only compare it with the magnificent „Millenial Anthem" of Iceland, composed by Matthias Jochumsson, which is inspired with the same spirit of consecration and intercession. "Iceland's thousand years", he writes, „are a flower of sternity, bedewed with tears, that praises its God and dies."

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It is most fitting that Hungary should pause this year to commemorate the centenary of Kölcsey's great hymn.

*

"Bless the Magyar, O our God,
"Bountifully, gladly!
"Sheld with Thy protecting hand
"When his foes smite madly!
"Fate, of old, has rent him sore;
"May it now bring healing!
"By-gone sins are all aton'd
"Ev'n the future sealing.[1]

"Peaks of high Carpathian hills
"Thou didst give our sires;
"Sons of Bendeguz receiv'd
"Thus their fair hearst-fires;
"Where the waves of Tisza glide,
"Where the Danube rages,
"Valiant seed of Árpád grew,
"Flourish'd through the ages.

"Let Cumanian cornfields wave
"Golden for our pleasure;
"Let the vineyards of Tokay
"Yield us nectar's treasure.
"Thou hast often reard'd our flags
"High on Turkish tower;
"Proud Vienna groan'd to see
"Matthias and his power.

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[1] The Hungarians in the succession states are persecuted for singing this. (The Editor.)

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"But, alas, our crimes provok'd
"Wrath as Thou didst ponder;
"Deafening through the heavens burst
"The indignant thunder.
"Soon the murderous Mongol's shaft
"Hiss'd at all beholders:
"Soon the Turkish yoke was set
"On our wounded shoulders.

"Often from wild Osman lips
"Chants of joy were spoken,
"Rais'd in triumph as they saw
"All our armies broken!
"Oft, O home-land, from thy breast
"Rose thy sons to free thee . . .
"Oft, alas, in stricken doom,
"As their grave they'd see thee.

"Fugitives in caves, they found
"Sword still reach'd to slay them;
"Vainly through their land they sought
"Homes in which to lay them;
"Up the hill and through the dale
"Grief and pain still drove them;
"Seas of blood were at their feet;
"Seas of flame above them.

"Once a castle (now but stones)
"Thrill'd with life and laughter;
"Now cold death and hoarse lament
"Come in anguish after.

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"And, alas, no freedom thrives
"Where our dead lie sleeping;
"Tears of tortur'd slavery fall
"Hot from orphans' weeping.

"Pity, then, our people, Lord,
"Shaken by disaster!
"Since a sea of grief engulfs,
"Save the Magyar, Master!
"Fate, of old, has rent him sore:
"May it bring now healing!
"By-gone sins are all aton'd,
"Ev'n the future sealing."

(Translated from the original of Kölcsey by *Watson Kirkconnell.)*

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