PÁL TÉREY: STUDENT OF BRITISH COUNTRY LIFE

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Much has been written about Hungarian travellers of the Age of Reform, who visited Britain in the wake of Széchenyi and Wesselényi to study political, social and technical developments in order to make use of their experiences when they returned to Hungary. Some left substantial accounts of their journeys, like Bertalan Szemere, István Gorove and Lőrinc Tóth; others incorporated the results of their studies into other works, like József Eötvös, and their views are well-known. After 1849, when numerous refugees settled in Britain, the main focus switches to their activities, and once again we have a considerable number of accounts of them, from Ferenc Pulszky and Dániel Kászonyi to Gyula Tanárky and others. All of them are admirable in their own way, and give a colourful picture of life in Britain at the time, but none of them really succeeds in penetrating that most British of all institutions, the country family and its life. Certain stereotypes emerge; the British character is described usually as rather cold and unbending; Szemere compares and contrasts it with that of the French and Germans, and concludes that comfort, wealth and freedom are the commonest words heard among the folk he meets, but that there are several negative aspects (such as a lack of musical ability) which produce a somewhat muted impression.[1] But it must be remembered that most of the writers, both before and after the Revolution of 1848, were either staying in hotels and boarding-houses for a relatively short time or living with other Hungarians in the cities to which they drifted as refugees after the Revolution. Very few of them succeeded in becoming part of the family, unless, as in the case of Széchenyi and Sándor Teleki, there were family connections.[2]

Very little is written about country life either, since apart from horse-racing in the countryside and a few visits to picturesque parts of the country like the Scottish lowlands and lakes, most travellers stayed in towns.

This is what makes a little-known book by Pál Térey so interesting. His name is practically unknown today, but he wrote by far the most detailed account in Hungarian of British farm-life at a time when the mechanization of farming was spreading rapidly throughout the country. His *Angol-Skóthoni Napló,* published privately in Pest in 1859, describes his practical experience as a student of agriculture in Britain, and is clearly intended to be used as a guide for those who follow in his footsteps, as well as a useful reference-work for Hungarian farmers who may be tempted to mechanize their operations.

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The author, who lived from 1831 to 1883, was born in Nagykároly, and it therefore seems likely that he was related to the Mari Térey who is known from literary history as the friend of Júlia Szendrey, Petőfi's wife. He embarked on a military career which was suddenly broken in two by the Revolution of 1848; he rapidly became a major in the hussars and was an aide to Klapka at Komárom. After the siege there, he left the country and studied briefly in Munich before gaining a pardon and returning to enter the service of the County of Szatmár. This did not last long, because in 1858 he began to study agriculture seriously, embarking on a long study-tour which took him first to model farms in Transdanubia (notably Cenk), then to Ursendorf in Lower Austria to see Baron Ward's mechanized farm; from here he travelled to Dresden, Frankfurt and Hohenheim, where there was a famous agricultural school. Here he studied for some four weeks, leaving with two other Hungarian companions, Ödön Hallósy and Béla Nagy, for Brussels, where they saw how flax was produced and manufactured, and Britain, where after a very brief stay in London they travelled to Lincoln to begin their studies. Térey had a number of letters of introduction from the Hungarian Farmer's Society (MGE) which proved useful as a way of opening the door to farming life in both England and Scotland. From time to time during his stay he reported back to sponsors and friends in Hungary, and on his return after some nine months abroad, he wrote his lengthy and detailed book.

Térey had one thing in common with earlier visitors, and that was his youth. (Széchenyi was 24 when he first visited Britain, for example, and Ágoston Trefort had travelled through most of northern Europe at the age of 19.) He was 27, and clearly devoted to his subject. It is also clear from his book that he preferred the practice of agriculture to the theory, and though at first he was astonished to find that there were virtually no agricultural colleges in Britain (there was one at Cirencester, in Gloucestershire, and Oxford University had begun to take tentative steps in that field, but these were all), he soon came to enjoy the practical guidance he received.

Térey had a letter of introduction to the firm of Clayton and Shuttleworth in Lincoln, one of the largest manufacturers of agricultural machinery in the country–and one whose name was familiar enough in Hungary, for up to the time of nationalization in 1948, the firm of Hofherr, Schrantz, Clayton & Shuttleworth was established in Budapest, and their initials HSCS were a common sight on the tractors of those times. Though Térey committed a social gaffe in taking his letter of introduction personally, Mr Clayton advised him to stay in Lincoln and study there. At first there were problems, since the Hungarian students could not find a farmer who was willing to give them board and lodging and to teach them at the same time. In the end they lived in lodgings in Lincoln itself and found an experienced farmer, Mr Mawer, who agreed to teach them for £ 80 for three months–a very large sum in those days. He lived some two miles from the city and had three farms to supervise. So the Hungarian students (who were now four, since another one, Imre Ebeczky, joined them there) walked out to meet Mr Mawer in the early morning and spent the whole day with him, sometimes learning the theory, but more often observing the practice of farming and taking part in it. In the evening Térey returned to his lodgings to write up his records. He declares that he had never been so happy in his life, once he had come to terms with the English language, of which he had

very little knowledge when he first arrived there, and in a town of some 30,000 inhabitants he could find nobody with a knowledge of German who could teach him English through that language. In the end he compromised with lessons from a schoolmaster who knew Latin. But then he also had to acquire the specialized vocabulary of farming and–something that was in its infancy then,–the technical vocabulary necessary for describing farm machinery. Here it should be added that Lincoln was a good choice, since it was, and still is, the centre of a large and varied farming area, with flat lands to the south and more hilly regions to the north, and the soil is fertile; moreover farming standards have long been high in the county, so that Térey was able to see and experience the most efficient and progressive methods during his course of training. He himself regarded his time there as worth two whole years of theory. Mr Mawer proved a good tutor, who gradually extended the range of his knowledge and took him to model farms and exhibitions in other parts of the country, all of which he recorded with more attention to detail than any other Hungarian traveller in Britain–in fact his account is of the greatest possible value to those interested in the history of agriculture and rural life, since it contains precise facts and figures on every aspect of the subject.

Térey stresses the importance of country life from the very beginning of his account:

> "Whoever wishes to know the real beauty of England and Scotland and the secrets of farming and comprehend them properly must first of all become acquainted with country life. It is in this that these people find their entire happiness; from the highest aristocracy and the rich city-dweller to the least and poorest folk it is there that they find the poetry of life–where poetry is no longer fantasy but the word made flesh! The industry and work of the farmer have realized the dreams of the poets and have transformed these countries into a flourishing evergreen garden where the spirit of Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, Goldschmit (i.e. Goldsmith) and the other classical poets still lives and will continue to live by the comfortable hearth in the tiniest cottage."[3]

From this rhapsodic introduction, he goes on to warn his readers against prejudices that have arisen from watching the behaviour of Englishmen abroad or in London clubs–or, much more interestingly, from the attitude of certain statesmen: this is clearly a reference to the official British policy with regard to Austria and Hungary after 1849. If Hungarians wish to obtain a realistic picture of the English as they really are, then the country is the place to see and experience this; the country towns, scattered villages and farmhouses are the right objects of study.

> "So let us leave London. . . and seek the English people *par excellence* there; let us acquaint ourselves with the reality behind the poetic dream, let us seek friends there and once we have entered the home of a farmer or countryman, let us rid ourselves of our continental habits. . . and when we have found our way among social customs that are so very different from our own, we shall find trusty friends who will guide us with a sure hand towards the goal we have set ourselves. . . Whoever does not feel himself strong enough to make himself at home with English social customs should go to England merely to observe, but not to study seriously; there he will find only reserve and silent lips and besides not achieving the aims of his study, he will never be able to enjoy what is fine and uplifting in the country, what is the basis of the

happiness of this nation, what is inexpressible in words—and what lies in the inner social life there."[4]

He then gives some good practical advice for prospective students:

"First obtain proper statistical data (here he implies a good general knowledge of the country)
Speak English well
Adapt yourself to the social habits of England
Have sufficient money to cover the journey
Have a clear conception of the agricultural situation in Hungary and a strong desire to study; only then will the expected results be reached."[5]

Then, putting his precepts into practice, he provides a summary of British statistics, geography, climate, religious observance (this is important because of the virtual cessation of all work and pleasures on Sundays) and the types and sizes of various farms and estates, colleges, institutions and societies. He lists journals and books, and ends his practical introduction with a list of weights and measures, imports and exports of agricultural products and taxes and duties payable on everything concerned with agriculture.

Térey then describes his studies. And here it must be noted that he was in Britain at a favourable time, for the memories of 1848 were still fresh. He himself was surprised to discover how much knowledge there was of what had happened then, and he comments that it was a great advantage to be Hungarian.[6] This was particularly so in Scotland. He also remarks that he has visited schools where a *History of Hungary* was given to pupils as a Christmas present.[7] This was presumably the book published in London in 1856 by Edwin L. Godkin, entitled *The History of Hungary and the Magyars;* this is something of a mystery, since it has much in common with a French volume, *La Hongrie* (Paris, 1853), edited by M. J. Boldényi, alias Pál Szabó, whose whole life seems to have been spent in escaping from his creditors.

From the very beginning of his journey of study, Térey notes social habits and customs. There was, as already mentioned, the problem of his letter of introduction to Clayton and Shuttleworth in Lincoln. He went with it to Mr Clayton's private house instead of sending it by post. Not surprisingly, Mr Clayton was somewhat startled to discover an unknown foreigner on his doorstep, but "since he had some notion of foreign habits, he did not censor me too severely for this lapse on my part. . ., but readily offered to be of service and help."[8] This allows Térey to comment on the frequently-stated truth that the Englishman's home is his castle, and that there are proper ways of entering it. He stresses the importance of a letter of introduction, which opens doors to almost everything, and points out that nobody is interested in one's passport.

Térey had plenty of opportunity to observe family life. As his knowledge of both English and farming methods developed, Mr Mawer, who seems to have been a very sensible instructor, took him to a mixture of large estates and smaller farms to display different types of agriculture, and he met landowners and farmers of all kinds socially as well as professionally. So he describes how after visiting a model farm on the estate of the Duke of Rutland at Belvoir Castle, the local manager entertained neighbouring farmers

and the Hungarian students to dinner in his house.[9] He also comments on the fact that most owners of large estates are excellent farmers too, unlike the Hungarian aristocracy. Another social occasion is the market, or rather the dinner at the end of the transaction of business at the market, when the local farmers meet at an inn to eat a hearty meal. He was invited several times to such a dinner and describes the event as a relaxation. The farmers are open and friendly; although they elect a chairman for the dinner, there are no formal toasts or formalities of any kind, and afterwards there may be singing or friendly talk. (This kind of scene, incidentally, has been beautifully described in English fiction, notably in Constance Holme's *The Lonely Plough*, first published in 1914.) Térey notes the difference between the friendliness at dinner and the serious transactions of a few hours earlier, and comments that the British do not mix business with pleasure; at the market they concentrate on the former, but once it is finished, they relax. And here he inserts a description of a political dinner he attended in Lincoln, a "meeting and dinner of the parliamentary reformers", to which he was invited by a rich factory-owner by the name of Norton. Now whether this was his future father-in-law or not is uncertain, but he certainly married a Miss Norton, though not during his study-tour.[10]

Térey's travels took him to London, to see the annual Smithfield Show (still very much part of the agricultural scene in England), to Essex and Northamptonshire to see special farming methods, and to various towns in the east of England (Ipswich, Boston and Grantham) where agricultural machinery was produced; this is one of his main interests, and at the end of his book he has a virtual catalogue of all the machines then in use, with illustrations and detailed descriptions of their performance, often from his own observation. He also took the opportunity to visit a coal-mine near Newcastle, noting, like other Hungarian travellers, the dreadful conditions of work underground and the dangerous life of the miners. They are comparatively well-paid, he observes, earning two or three times as much as a farm-labourer, but they work in far less healthy circumstances and cannot obtain life-insurance.[11] After this grim experience, he has a much more pleasant one–a visit to Gretna Green, the famous place just over the Scottish border where the village blacksmith performed marriages (Babits's poem of the same title, written in 1906, recalls the romance attached to the place). He declares that in previous years some 300–400 couples were married over the anvil each year, but that now the numbers had decreased, and that there were in the blacksmith's register some names from high society, notably the Duke of Capua, the son of King Francis I of Sicily, who had married a Miss Caroline Smyth there in 1836.[12] These visits were on his way to Scotland, where once again the letter of introduction worked wonders. Here he was passed on from farmer to farmer, each of whom welcomed him into his home and showed him what he wished to see. One of these farm-visits took him to East Craigil farm, near Edinburgh:

> "We returned to the farmhouse at dusk; here we were greeted by food on the table, a good fire and the farmer's pretty young wife. Two pairs of slippers were set out for us by the fire. At the request of the hostess, and following her husband's example, I too unlaced my heavy boots and soon began to feel comfortable in slippers. I should point out that I found this custom not only here, but in many places throughout Scotland and England. . . We said a prayer, ate and

again said grace. Then for two hours I got out my notebook and took down details of the farm. Meanwhile our hostess sat beside us in the brightly-lit room with its three gas lamps, sewing and occasionally putting more coal on the fire. When she saw me close my notebook and I had thanked her husband, she asked me to tell them something about Hungary and our customs, and I gladly did so. But I was astonished when she interrupted my account from time to time to tell me of events and scenes I had omitted, not suspecting that they would be of the slightest interest to ladies abroad. . . When the table had been cleared, the two women-servants came in, the man of the house opened the family bible and the room became a prayer-room. We all knelt down and the head of the family read some psalms, then said evening prayers, after which there was silence. Then the servants and the hostess left us, and the last scene of the day ensued: a glass of Scotch whisky mixed with sugar and hot water, together with a pipe of tobacco, and then we too went to bed."[13]

This is the kind of detail that makes *Angol-Skóthoni napló* so different from most travellers' accounts, and it leads to an entire chapter devoted to farm life as Térey saw it. He prefaces it with a well-known quotation from Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* ("Sweet Auburn, loveliest village of the plain. . ."), though curiously he omits the part of the line mentioning "whispering lovers". Clearly he regards English farm-life as idyllic, though he is careful to note that his experience of it is limited to farmers who are neither gentry nor smallholders: he describes those who farm between 200 and 800 acres (140–563 *hold*), in other words the typical land-holding in Eastern England and lowland Scotland. The farmer appears at market in a well-cut suit and coat, a top-hat and black tie with a clean collar and thicksoled boots. He either rides a good horse or travels in a light dog-cart. And he is there to do business–something that distinguishes him sharply from Hungarian farmers; moreover he is a good businessman as well as farmer.[14]

The typical farmhouse is described in detail, and there are illustrations and plans of what are instantly recognizable as good solid Victorian farmhouses in Eastern England. He points out that they are not expensively-furnished, and that the front door is always firmly shut. There is no attempt at symmetry on the outside; inside all is planned for comfort. It stands apart from the other farm buildings, partly because in that way the air is cleaner, and partly because sparks from the tall chimneys might set fire to them. Frequently there is a pond or grove of trees nearby. Inside, everything is designed for practical purposes. On the ground-floor and in the bedrooms there are thick carpets, and the walls are papered and not painted. The pictures are generally of landscapes (this was the age of English landscape-painting) or may be engravings. The rooms downstairs rarely contain sofas, and have a "picturesque confusion", with small tables holding picture-albums, freshly-cut flowers and other ornaments. The bedrooms are simple and severe for "the Englishman would not dream of receiving even his best friend in his bedroom, where there is never any heating and he uses it solely for sleeping and washing."[15] Indeed, the guest at a farmhouse cannot leave the company, but must go to bed at the same time as everyone else, and then he simply gets a small candle to take with him. Incidentally this lack of heating in bedrooms persists even today. There is a splendid passage in Pál Tábori's *Londoni napló* (1945) describing how he had a road accident on the way between Dover and Canterbury one cold foggy night, and had to spend the night in a

hotel, where there was delicious heat everywhere except in the bedrooms, and the porter assured him that it was unhealthy to have warm bedrooms.[16]

As for the inhabitants of the farmhouse, the farmer himself is intensely practical. He knows his subject thoroughly, is reluctant to adopt methods he has not tried for himself, and is convinced of his own ability to farm. Once indoors, he is a family man, and family happiness is one of the chief features of the farming community everywhere. Britain has strict views and laws designed to protect family life, and great store is set by the faithfulness of husband and wife. The women spend their days entirely in the farmhouse and the surrounding garden, and are devoted to their husbands, whose affairs do not concern them. The children and the house keep them fully occupied.

Although the outward appearance of these farms and their inhabitants suggests some wealth, the farmers are not rich; they do not collect treasures and have no hidden sources of wealth. They prefer comfort, spending their income on their housekeeping and any unexpected gains are ploughed back into their farms. Their active life in the open gives them a great appetite, and they are accustomed to the best bread, tasty meat and the strongest beer, wine and spirits. But these they use in moderation: drunkennness is rare. "In brief, beneath the slightly rough exterior of the farmer we find a natural and healthy kernel."[17] He is hospitable and friendly, but only to those for whom he has some real attraction, and this develops slowly; so that he usually only has one or two acquaintances whom he will call friends, though he tries to maintain good relations with his neighbours. But once he makes friends, that lasts for a lifetime. He is reserved in manner towards those he does not know, but with friends he is open—and it is offensive for friends to show reserve to him. That is why, when he invites friends to his house, he always informs them who else will be there, in case there might be some stiffness in the company. It is better to refuse an invitation than risk upsetting the host by behaving stiffly at his table.

Térey then goes on to consider etiquette. One does not make introductions in the street. It is proper to be introduced by an acquaintance and with a certain degree of formality; otherwise a letter of introduction will be equally appropriate. Soon an invitation will be received, and if it is to dinner, then the best can be expected. "The French are masters of preparing food, the English give more attention to the raw material."[18] He then sketches a typical dinner, noting that it is customary for each course to be cleared before beginning the next, and that at the end of the meal the table is cleared and fruit and wine placed on the polished surface. Then the ladies retire to the drawing-room, where after an hour or so the men join them for a cup of tea. But there are various rules of behaviour to be observed, and most of them have to be caught, not taught. First, it is rude not to appear punctually. Then when dinner is announced, one must wait for the hostess to decide who shall accompany whom and where one is to sit at the table. And so he continues with very sensible advice. Feminists will be pleased to read that in his view women rule English society; men make up for this by sitting together for a long time after meals and in Parliament and their clubs. Girls have more freedom than in Hungary and through their education acquire a certain independence; this lasts until they get married, and then begins what would appear to Hungarians to be imprisonment—except that the English-woman regards this imprisonment as earthly paradise, and she

desires nothing more than a happy family home. There is no point in behaving slavishly towards women in England; they will only despise one for it. Girls go about unaccompanied, but married women are accompanied by their husbands when they go out; the same is true of attendance at concerts or dances. But one should not greet them in the street unless they make the first move.

As for children, they are linked to their parents by love and respect, and the parents do not behave like tyrants to them but instruct them gently. Fathers never ask their sons what they have been doing, nor women their daughters, because they do not need to: the children will tell them. There is total trust between them.

No doubt Térey describes the best of country life as he sees it in the families that he visited. But even so, his observation is as detailed as that of Péter Apor, for example, writing about the old customs in his *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae*. And the technical side of his book is equally detailed, with minute descriptions of the farms he visited and the agricultural machinery he examined, all with Hungarian conditions in mind. Like the travellers of the Reform Age, he is comparing and contrasting–but this time not political manifestations or constitutional problems, but practical farming methods. While he was in Britain, he wrote articles for various Hungarian agricultural journals (*Vadász- és Versenylap, Gazdasági Lapok, Falusi Gazda* and *Magyar Gazda*). He also wrote a number of detailed letters which are printed either in the text of his book or in the appendix. Some of these deal with aspects not treated in the main text, such as horse-breeding and racing (subjects which had been in evidence since Széchenyi's first visit in 1815). Nevertheless the unique contribution of Térey is his fine description of country life. In its own way, it is as valuable a contribution to knowledge of that period as Paget's *Hungary and Transylvania* is for students of Hungarian life.

One of the Hungarian contacts he had in Britain was also concerned with agriculture. This was Gyula Tanárky, of whom he includes a brief biography, and whose diary of the years 1849–1866 was published in the *Magyar Századok* series in 1961.[19] Tanárky had been a farm manager in Hungary before the Revolution and came to Britain with the Pulszky family, where he acted as tutor; he also did some tutoring in the Kossuth family while they were in London. Tanárky found a new outlet for his love of farming in Britain, where he, like Térey, became interested in machinery and wrote articles about the latest developments in *Gazdasági Lapok* from 1856 onwards. Later, like Bertalan Szemere, he became a wine-merchant for a time. Unfortunately this diary has no record of the years between 1853 and 1858, but there are one or two references to Térey in it, from which it would appear that Térey maintained contacts with Kossuth and Klapka in particular.[19a]

It is interesting to note that both Tanárky and Térey returned to Hungary to continue their careers in agriculture. Tanárky became representative for one of the British machinery firms (Ruston & Hornsby), and Térey went back to make use of his new knowledge. In 1862 he was sent back to London as the representative of MGE to the World Exhibition; in 1864 he studied the production of flax in France. In the following year he played a leading role in the national agricultural exhibition in Hungary and in 1867 he was the official representative of Hungary at the Paris Exhibition, there being awarded the cross of the Légion d'Honneur and made a member of the French Académie

Nationale. Then, like Tanárky, he became the Hungarian representative for the English agricultural machinery firm of Rabey & Sons. He died at Budafok (Promontor) at the early age of 52. Apart from his one book and a number of articles on agriculture he published nothing. Yet he can be seen as a man of foresight, who knew what he wanted to achieve in a certain specific field and did so. He was one of the pioneers of modern agriculture in Hungary, having seen the benefits of mechanization in Britain. And he also succeeded in writing one of the most detailed descriptions of English farming and family life in existence, either in Hungarian or in English. The motto of his book is characteristic of the man:

> "There is nothing so revolutionary, because there is nothing so unnatural and convulsive, as the strain to keep things fixed when all the world is by the very law of its creation in eternal progress."

He believed in change, and did his best to encourage it. Some 19 years after his death, a party of English farmers from Essex paid a visit to Hungary, and on their return published an account of their experiences.[20] In addition to the main account of their trip, the book contains the comments of individual members of the party, most of whom believed that there was much to learn from farming methods there, an interesting comment on the tremendous progress that had been made, thanks to the pioneering work of such figures as the undeservedly forgotten Térey.

Notes

1. Szemere Bertalan, *Utazás külföldön*, ed. Steinert Ágota, Budapest, 1983, p. 312.
2. Széchenyi's sister-in-law was Caroline Meade; Sándor Teleki's first wife was the daughter of Lord and Lady Langdale.
3. Térey Pál, *Angol-Skóthoni Napló 1858. és 1859. évekről*, Pest, 1859, p. 2. (Hereafter Térey)
4. Térey, p. 3.
5. Térey, p. 4.
6. Térey, p. 27.
7. Térey, p. 28.
8. Térey, p. 32.
9. Térey, p. 38.
10. Szinnyei József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, XIV, Budapest, 1914, p. 19 (under Térey Gábor).
11. Térey, p. 118.
12. Térey, p. 120.
13. Térey, p. 133–4.
14. Térey, p. 155.
15. Térey, p. 157.
16. Tábori Pál, *Londoni napló*, London, 1945, p. 11.
17. Térey, p. 161.
18. Térey, p. 164.
19. *Tanárky Gyula naplója* (1849–1866), ed. Koltay-Kastner Jenő, Budapest, 1961.

19[a] Tanárky, pp. 64–5, 78, 87, 149–150.

20. T. S. Dymond, ed., *Agricultural Industry and Education in Hungary*, Chelmsford, 1902.