

THEATRE • LITERATURE • ART

ALBERT BERZEVICZY †

Hungarian public life and the Hungarian world of science suffered a great loss recently by the death (on March 2nd) of Albert Berzeviczy.

Albert Berzeviczy was one of the outstanding figures of a generation that gave the nation Count Albert Apponyi. His long life and personality were in more than one respect reminiscent of those of the latter statesman, and after the death of Count Apponyi, Albert Berzeviczy was the only man who by virtue of his comprehensive culture and real European outlook could, to a certain extent, fill the gap. And now he too is gone from among us.

Albert Berzeviczy was born in 1853 at Berzevice. He was the descendant of a Hungarian family of ancient lineage which for hundreds had lived in the counties of Sáros and Szepes. This beautiful region, lying at the feet of the Carpathians, was for centuries one of the most notable sources from which the Hungarian nation drew its strength, until Trianon tore it away from the mother-country and allotted it to Czecho-Slovakia. Albert Berzeviczy's career, which was to be so rich in successes, began there. After finishing his schooling, in the course of which he studied at several foreign universities, he was elected first deputy recorder and then recorder of the County of Sáros. Like many another man distinguished in Hungarian public life he received his fundamental knowledge of politics and administration from a study of the County system which for centuries has been a self-governing one. When barely 25 years of age he became professor in the Academy of Law in Eperjes, which, after the Czechs had taken possession of that town, was forced to remove to Miskolc in Dismembered Hungary. In 1881 he was elected member of parliament for Eperjes (Prešov), the capital town of his native county, on the Liberal platform of the then Prime Minister, Coloman Tisza. Three years later he became ministerial councillor in the Ministry of Public Education, where after another three years he was appointed secretary of state. In 1895 he was elected Deputy Speaker in the Hungarian Parliament, in 1896 he became Privy Councillor, in 1903 Minister of Public Education, and in 1910 Speaker. These were the outstanding milestones in his political career. In 1911 out of motives of principle he resigned the Speakership, but his authority and influence instead of diminishing grew, and to the last his speeches in the Upper House, as well as his articles in the press, were considered events in Hungarian public life.

In the nineties already we find Albert Berzeviczy actively concerned in the movements the aim of which was the organization of international politics and the development of international law. In 1896 he was elected Vice Chairman of the Hungarian group (then just formed) of the Interparliamentary Union. After the death of Count Albert Apponyi he became President of the Group, having also succeeded Albert Apponyi as President of the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Society. He was also honorary member of the Paris Academy of International Diplomacy; and at the General Assemblies of the League of Nations repeatedly represented Hungary as Chief Delegate of the Hungarian Government. But the principal scene of his international activity was the Interparliamentary Union.

His speeches on the disarmament question in which he kept that question *sur le tapis* and persistently insisted upon its being adjusted, are of permanent value. In his speeches he always laid the chief

stress upon equality as between nations; and he used unanswerable arguments to show the injustice of the military inferiority forced on Hungary in the Treaty of Trianon which leaves Hungary quite defenceless, pointing out the danger latent in the States defeated in the Great War being disarmed by force and left entirely at the mercy of neighbours armed to the teeth. He was also at all times a generous advocate of the cause of the minorities when the question was brought up for discussion in the Union. Berzeviczy was repeatedly invited to give lectures in foreign countries; and during the course of his activity in this field he always showed himself to be the champion of international solidarity.

The first ancestor of Albert Berzeviczy of whom we have a record is mentioned in the historical records of the XIII century as Magister Gallus. He must therefore have had a university degree and been a scholar. Perhaps it was from this early forbearer that the late descendant inherited his unquenchable thirst for knowledge, which to the last days of his life marked his personality even more than his political instincts did. If we cast a glance over the list of his works a wide perspective opens out before us, of which his scholarly studies provide the background. With the torch of history, art, Law, and politics in his hand, he went over a wide territory covered by a multitude of subjects — from Italian art, especially the sculpture and paintings of the *cinquecento* and the *settecento*, to the minutest details of Shakespeare's immortal dramas; from the figure of Beatrice of Aragon, Queen of Hungary in the renaissance period, to the woeful days of Austrian absolutism that followed the break-down of the Hungarian war of independence in 1848 and 1849; and from the reform of university education to the effects on the peace treaties on science and literature. His erudition was widely known and in recognition of his merits the Hungarian world of science elected him President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences after he had been Chairman of the élite Kisfaludy Society for six years. In these two rôles he for decades directed Hungary's cultural policy, and only death wrested the leader's staff from his grasp. For it was only a few weeks before his death, when his sense of duty forbade him to yield to the repeated requests of that scientific body that he should continue to conduct its affairs, that he resigned his position as President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

A nation's grief followed him on his last journey to the crypt of the Berzeviczy family, where in Hungarian soil now occupied by an alien race was laid to rest this "Grand Old Man" of Hungarian political and scientific life.

Observer.

FRANCIS HERCZEG'S "JULIA SZENDREY" IN THE VIENNA BURGTHEATER

The great Hungarian writer, Francis Herczeg's play "Julia Szendrey", the heroine of which is the wife of Alexander Petöfi, the greatest of Hungarian lyric poets, will be performed for the first time in German in April in the Vienna Burgtheater, the classical home of Viennese histrionic art, under the title of "Petöfi's Julia". The première will take place during the Vienna "Jubel Wochen" (festival weeks), a fact in itself proving the great importance attached by the Burgtheater to Francis Herczeg's play.