

A HUNGARIAN LEGEND:  
A STORY FOR CHILDREN.



REAT excitement prevailed in the ancient castle of Loewenstein. For the day had

come upon which the lord of the castle must start for the seat of war. The time of which we are writing is that of the early Crusades, when Hungary was invaded and overrun by a powerful Tartar tribe, led by a chief named Cadan. In this emergency, the Hungarian King appealed for aid to his nobles and vassals, amongst whom one of the most loyal was Emmerick, of Loewenstein. Emmerick had armed his retainers with great celerity, and a certain exhilaration of spirit; but now that the actual moment of departure had arrived, the cloud of grief was upon his brow. For he dearly loved his wife, the noble Lady Agnes, and also his fair sons and daughters, and to part from them, never, perhaps, to see them again in this world, was a terrible trial. Lady Agnes shared in these gloomy forebodings, for she knew only too well the half-savage, barbarous character of her country's foes.

"I will take care of him," said Andrew Budiak, seeking to comfort his lady.

Andrew was the castellan of Loewenstein. Although past the prime of life, he was still as bold in the battlefield as he was true in the castle hall, and he insisted, despite all remonstrances, upon accompanying his master to the seat of war.

At length Emmerick tore himself from his wife's embrace, and the little procession rode away.

Few chieftains had armed with the promptitude of the lord of Loewenstein, and the Magyar force was a small and inefficient one. The result was that when the Hungarians and Tartars joined in battle the former were completely overpowered and defeated by the latter.

During that fierce and terrible battle, which caused the river of Lago to run red with blood, the knight Emmerick and his trusty servant fought and fell together. All night they lay upon the battlefield; and there, at dawn of day, they were found by some of the Tartars. Both men, having

partially recovered consciousness, and given unmistakable signs of life, were raised from the ground, borne to the Tartar camp, and became the property of the chief, Cadan.

They were barely allowed a few days of rest, in which to recover from their wounds. Then, when their new master was assured there was no longer danger of their dying by the way, he ordered them to be chained together. With a score of others, also linked in pairs, and attached by the centre of their fetters to the stirrup of a Tartar horseman, who bore a lance in his hand, a bow at his saddle, and a quiver of arrows at his back, they were driven onward, with curses and rough blows, towards their captor's home.

After weary months of agonising suspense, a report reached the Lady Agnes

cell by one of the hired labourers employed in erecting additional sheds for the numerous and overcrowded captives; at the sight, Budiak felt a thrill of hope and gladness.

The night wore on. The watch had been set. Each prisoner had answered to his name, called by the captain of the guard, and the deep slumber of over-wrought strength had fallen upon the wretched band, ere Budiak ventured to reveal to the knight the secret of his newly acquired treasure. Each had the same thought. Chained together as they were, escape was impossible; but, if with this axe they could sever their fetters, they would have a chance of regaining their freedom. With great caution, muffling the sound of the iron links with the folds of their coarse garments, the



“THEY WERE DRIVEN ONWARD.”

that her husband was dead. It is needless to say how great was her grief. Only her religion and her children afforded her any consolation.

The report, however, was a false one; Emmerick and Budiak were spending their days in toil, suffering, and tears. At last, one night, a gleam of hope visited them. As they sank down side by side upon their bed of leaves, Budiak caught sight of an axe, which had been accidentally left in their

two captives began their attempt. Alas! all their efforts were in vain; in spite of all that they could do, the ponderous chain remained intact. In despair, each turned aside to weep.

“I am so grieved for *you*, my poor Budiak!” said Emmerick. “But for your fidelity to me, you would be still free and happy. I can never forget that!”

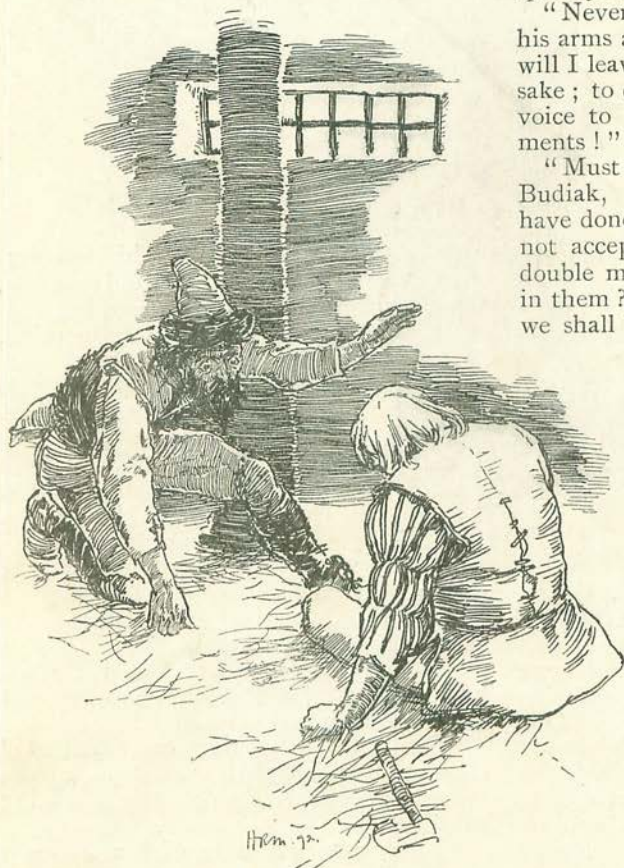
“Never mind about *me*, my good lord,” answered Budiak; “I can well support my

own misery, for I am alone in the world. With you it is otherwise, for you have your wife and children to think of. You, moreover, were born to greatness, and have lost your birthright. But," he added, as a thought struck him, "it must be regained."

"Alas! there is no hope for either of us," murmured the knight, burying his face in his hands.

He was aroused by the sound of a heavy blow. Not one which had fallen upon a hard and resisting substance; it was a peculiar, smothered crash that, although he knew not then why, thrilled the very core of his heart.

"What have you done, Budiak?" he inquired, hurriedly.



"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, BUDIAK?"

"My dear lord," gasped out his follower, "there was but the accursed Tartar chain between you and freedom, and we could not break it. It detains you here no longer.

Go back to your wife, and be happy. Tell her——"

He paused as if in agony, and Emmerick bent over him to ascertain the cause. With a start of horror, he exclaimed: "Tell me that I dream—I dare not—will not—believe that you have done this!"

"Calm yourself, my lord, and think of flight," replied the heroic vassal. As he spoke he raised himself by a violent effort, and wrenched away from the fetter with which it had been encircled the leg which he had sacrificed to his beloved master. "Let me fling off this useless limb, which has never served me so well as it has done this day. And now, be wary, my lord, and you are free; for our captors have trusted largely to this chain, and with silence and speed your success is almost certain."

"Never!" returned Emmerick, throwing his arms around the wounded man, "never will I leave you here alone, maimed for my sake; to die, perhaps, without one friendly voice to murmur peace in your last moments!"

"Must I then know," remonstrated Budiak, with great earnestness, "that I have done this thing in vain? Will you not accept my poor service? Will you double my sufferings by your participation in them? If we are found here at dawn, we shall both be the victims of an act for which I alone am responsible. You cannot surely be so cruel? Come, my dear, dear lord, rouse yourself, I implore you, and depart. Then I shall be able to forget my physical sufferings in my prayers for your safety and success, as I follow you in thought upon your homeward path."

"I will *not* leave you thus," persisted the knight.

"Nay, then, have the truth," and once more the gallant castellan raised himself upon his arm, and struggled against the faintness that was rapidly overcoming him. "Even now I feel that I am dying. My heart flutters for a moment like a newly caged bird, and then stands still; and the life-blood is being drained from my veins. Farewell, my beloved master, farewell!"

Budiak's fast-failing strength scarcely sufficed for these last words. Utterly exhausted by the effort he had made, he fell back upon the earth cold, motionless, un-

conscious — to all appearance, lifeless. Emmerick doubted not for a moment that the brave soul had fled.

At first the knight could do nothing but weep over the body of his noble friend. But thoughts of home grew upon him. Budiak must not have died in vain. Perhaps his loving spirit was even now watching over his master, grieved and disappointed by his delay. Emmerick braced himself for action, and with but little difficulty effected his escape. But his homeward journey was a hard and toilsome one.

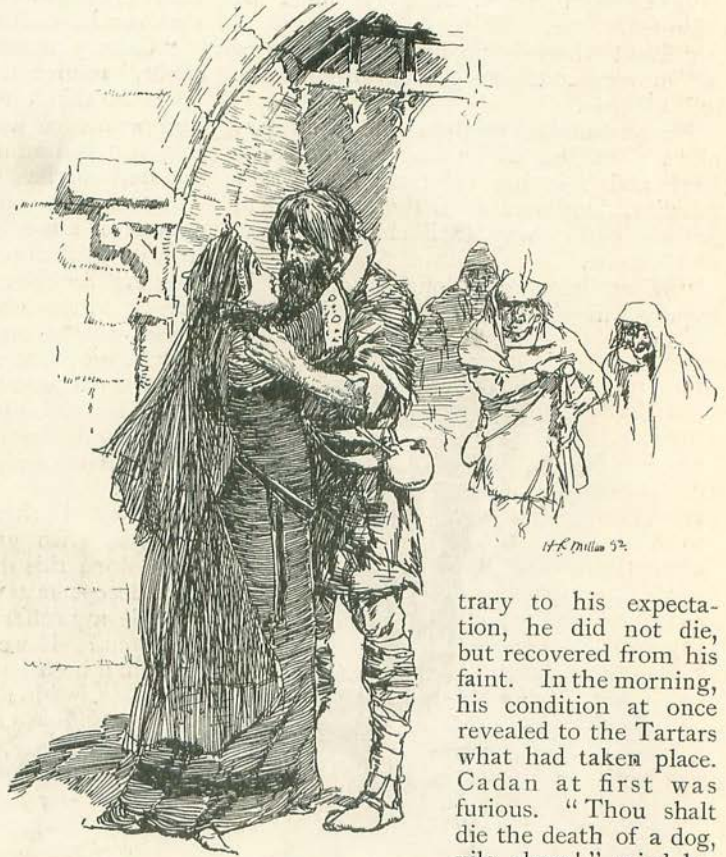
It was the second anniversary of the battle in which Emmerick was supposed to have fallen. After a solemn requiem in the chapel, the Lady Agnes, covered from head to foot in a long black veil, proceeded to the great gate of the castle, for the pious purpose of distributing alms to all such as should be there to receive them. Around her stood her children. Each recipient was expected to repay his benefactress by a prayer for her beloved dead. The distribution had begun, when her eldest son, Geysa, said, "Serve this good pilgrim soon, I pray you, mother, for he seems very faint and weary with toil and want. And he must be a good man; for, see! even amid his rags, he has preserved a picture of Our Lady, which he might have sold for food."

The lady, thus urged, turned towards the mendicant indicated by her son, and at once recognised in the relic a gift of her own made long ago to her husband. For a moment she stood speechless, gazing upon that gaunt, squalid figure; then, throwing back her veil, and displaying a countenance like that of one convulsed by a fearful dream, she gasped: "Speak! who and whence are you?"

"Agnes!" exclaimed a well-remembered

voice, and the next instant the trembling woman was in her husband's arms.

We must now return to Budiak. Con-



"'AGNES!' EXCLAIMED A WELL-REMEMBERED VOICE."

trary to his expectation, he did not die, but recovered from his faint. In the morning, his condition at once revealed to the Tartars what had taken place. Cadan at first was furious. "Thou shalt die the death of a dog, vile slave!" cried he, "without help or pity."

"I care not," was the calm reply; "I have saved my master."

"A fine master he! He left thee to perish," sneered the Tartar chief.

"He thought me dead," said Budiak. "I rejoice to think that he is now free, and will soon be in his own halls!"

"Only tell me that thou hast repented of the rash deed, and that, were it yet to do, thou wouldst refuse," urged the wondering chief.

"I may not pass away with a lie upon my lips," replied the castellan. "With this faithful right arm I would joyfully lop off every other limb, could I by the sacrifice ensure my master's happiness. And now, let me die; I have nothing more to live for. The only boon I would crave is that you would leave me in peace to pray for my

chief and my country, while yet I have breath to do it."

Cadan was conquered. He had never before known anything like this. With deep emotion, he said: "Christian, thou art stronger than I! The sun of success glitters to-day upon my arms, but its beam may glance off in some hour of peril, when such love as thine may be beyond all price. Strive against thy weakness, and live. Care and rest may yet restore thee;

and I swear that for the sake of the noble lesson thou hast taught my followers, thou shalt no sooner be able to keep the saddle than I will give thee gold, and arms, and a steed worthy of a monarch, and send thee under a safe escort to thy own people. So shall the



"CHRISTIAN, THOU ART STRONGER THAN I."

proud Hungarians learn that Cadan also can respect the virtue of fidelity."

Overcome by surprise and gratitude, the joyful Budiak endeavoured, maimed and suffering as he was, to cast himself at the feet of his generous captor; but, as he ceased speaking, the Tartar left the cell.

Hope is a potent physician. Combined with careful nursing, the prospect of home and freedom soon restored to the castellan some degree of strength. Then the Tartar chief fulfilled his promise to the letter, and the faithful Budiak, loaded with gifts, returned to his friends. As he felt himself pressed to the heart of his grateful master, who greeted him as "brother," as he beheld the Lady Agnes weeping over him, and received her children's warm kisses upon his cheek, he said to himself that here was full compensation for all his sufferings, and that his sacrifice was being amply repaid. And he was right.

Legs, it is true, are very valuable appendages, but love is the *most* precious thing in the whole world.