

C H A P. VIII.

SALT-PETRE MANUFACTORIES—BISHOP OF ERLAU'S STUD AND DAIRY—SALT MAGAZINE—FURED—GREAT PUSZTA—STRANGE ACCIDENT.

I WILLINGLY left Erlau: but instead of going immediately to Tokay, now only distant a short day's journey, which was my original plan, I was advised to alter my course, and visit that part of Hungary which lies on the other side of the Theis, as this is the rudest part of the kingdom, where I could best see the uncontaminated Hungarians. Accordingly, leaving the hills, I directed my course towards the great plain. As the county engineer and the bishop's steward were going in the same direction, I thought it convenient to accompany them.

On Sunday, June 16th, in the afternoon, I set off, and travelled through a flat country, with corn and pasture lands, and here and there a village. I passed one or two small saltpetre manufactories; the soil of the floors, &c. of the peasants' cottages is chiefly used. In these manufactories the process is carried no farther than the first crystallization,

zation, saltpetre being a monopoly belonging to government ; and in this state it must be delivered to the receivers of the crown at a price fixed by them, who purify it, and make it a marketable commodity. Storks were very common: they had now young ones, for which they shewed their affection by their restlessness on the approach of strangers. I observed in many places great heaps of dung, some of which seemed to have remained there for a great length of time: it was thrown there *only to get rid of it ; for in many parts of Hungary the land is never manured.* It is even said by the *Committee of Agriculture, that manure is not used in the greatest part of Hungary.* If you ask the true *Magyars* why, they say *their* soil is too rich. Nevertheless they let it rest every third year ; this is rather contradictory. Agriculture in this kingdom is in its most simple state. In about four hours we reached Hedwig, where we intended to pass the night.

This is a *puszta* which belongs to the misanthropic bishop I have said so much of. Here is his stud, and the groom was our host, as his house was the only one here. He has seven stallions, and a proportionable number of brood mares under his care: the stallions were of the largest breed, and very fine ; one was from England, and the rest out of the best horse countries of Germany, but not a single Hungarian. I think, when writers have spoken in high terms of the Hungarian horses, it has arisen by confounding them with the Hungarian *horse* or cavalry. The Hungarian breed of horses is very
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small; and in all the studs I have seen, the stallions, and often the brood mares, are brought from other countries; and the horses used by the more opulent Hungarians are either from foreign countries or of foreign extraction. All the walls or fences of the folds and inclosures were made by piling up the *useless* dung. The groom was a German, and the stud was conducted after the German manner; the stallions were kept in their stalls, and the foals at six months were separated from their mothers.

About half a mile further is the bishop's dairy, consisting of about seventy or eighty cows. The stalls are the finest I ever saw; they form one continued building of three hundred feet in length; in the middle there are two rows of stalls for the cows, and on each side are the stalls for the calves. The dairy itself was remarkably shabby and dirty. The bishop farms this out nearly in the manner that Count Festitich does his sheep. Every thing belongs to the bishop; and he gives the produce of the cows on the conditions of receiving annually for each cow, thirty pounds of butter and three shillings instead of milk: all the calves belong to the bishop; the pastures are his; and in the winter he provides straw for the cattle, but no hay.

In the morning we continued our route to Poroslo, on the banks of the Theis; this was only about an hour's ride. Here are the salt magazines for landing and depositing the rock-salt which comes from the county of Marmarufs; it is brought down the river on floats of pine trees, on which it is piled up like bricks, in great pieces of

fifty pounds to a hundred weight. In wet weather there is a considerable *deficit*. The quantity annually landed here is very great; last year it amounted to 118,000 cwt.: but this is not the only place of debarkation. The quantity of salt annually dug from the mines in the county of Marmarufs is estimated in the Hungarian Magazine at 600,000 cwt. From hence it is sent to the royal magazines in the towns, where it is sold to the public. A great many carts were waiting for loading on this business: two-pence halfpenny per cwt. is given for carting it to Erlau, and seven-pence halfpenny to Pest. The Marmarufs salt, which lies on this side of the Carpathian chain, is like that of Wielitzka on the other side; it is of a sparry texture, and must, without doubt, form great beds, as it does at Wielitzka. As the floats are here broken up and sold, Poroslo is likewise a depository of wood; one of the finest pines sells for about three shillings.

At the village we found an inn, whose external appearance was indicative of possessing something within more than tables and stools: but it was deceitful; the sight of the pantry was dreadfully alarming; it presented us with an awful absence of every kind of life-supporting object. As I had a letter of introduction to Mr. Zombati, a nobleman and farmer, we went and levied a dinner upon him: he gave us some excellent Erlau, little inferior to Burgundy wine. After dinner my companions returned to Erlau, and I crossed the Theis, the greatest river of the kingdom after the Danube, and went to Fured.

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As I did not come into this part of Hungary to see elegant buildings, perfected arts, and high polished manners, but rough men and their rude contrivances, I was satisfied. Fured is a town, or large village, of five or six hundred houses; these consist only of the ground-floor; they are thatched with reeds, and placed without any order. The town is seated by the side of a fen, which at the overflowings of the Theis, which often happen, becomes an immense lake. The inhabitants are graziers and farmers. I dined with one who was a nobleman, who had near two thousand sheep, and five or six hundred head of cattle. Some of the sheep were of the common kind, or, as they are here called, of the German breed; but the greater part were of the Hungarian breed (*Ovis Strepficeros*), whose long erect spiral horns, and long hairy fleeces, give them a singular appearance. This place is famous for Hungarian saddles. I was badly off for a means of communication, and I could not stir without my servant, the Hungarian language being alone spoken here. The surgeon was, I believe, the only person in the town who spoke German. As this town lies in the road to Debretzin, one of the most populous towns of the kingdom, and noted for its great and well-attended fairs, I expected to have found an inn, but I was obliged to go to the town-house*. Here I got a little dirty room

* As the public houses, if there are any, in the villages and small towns, are very bad, these are often provided with a small building or a room to transact public business in, and to accommodate those who travel in the service of the public. This was one of them.

with a straw-bed, and I sent out for my victuals, of which there were none to be had, except eggs and sheep's butter; this was à l'Espagnole.

The common people of Hungary make little use of inns. I have often seen them at night halt in great parties like caravans, in the neighbourhood of a town, and pass the night in the open air. Some watch the horses which are turned out to pasture, whilst the others rest; and I have frequently, when I have been a guest at a nobleman's seat, observed, however roomy his house might be, if I walked out very early in the morning, the men-servants of the family sleeping in their clothes in the court, on benches, tables, &c. and when I have been obliged to take up my night quarters in a peasant's cottage, I have often seen the husband sneak off at bed-time, and leave his wife, to go and sleep under a shed or in a hay-loft, to be cooler, and freer from fleas: so that I have often had the finest opportunities of having a *tête-à-tête* with some of the ——— ugliest women in Christendom. And the opulent are not so nice on the article of sleeping as we are. One married gentleman I knew who always slept on a kind of sofa, between two dressed deer-skins, only taking off his coat and boots. Most of them sleep in their drawers, and many in their waistcoats.

The fens abound with water-fowl, and I dare say with many rare ones. I went out with my gun, but was not successful. I had no
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time to spare, and the weather was very rainy and boisterous. Herons are very common, and feed with the storks in the fens, but none of them have *yet* learnt from the stork, from a *principle of imitation*, to build their nests upon the peasants' cottages. It is common at Fured to keep corn in subterranean cells, as in several other parts of Europe.

Not being fond of the famed golden age, which, unadorned by the fictions of poets, is but the poor uncultivated state of man, I had soon enough of this place; for the famed cottage, emblem of contentment and innocency, neither harbours under its humble roof greater happiness or more virtue than what is found within the accused stately mansion, supposed abode of gnawing care and anxious inquietude. Here man ought to be happy, there he might be happy: but this so little depends on these things, or rather on so many apparently more trifling ones, that the difference is not so great. Yet happy I think is the man who possesses a cultivated mind, and enjoys the elegancies of life! Twenty-four hours therefore at Fured were enough for me, and I then set out for Debretzin.

All the country lying between these two towns is a puszta. There is not a single village in the whole journey, though the distance is fifty miles; only about half way there is a tolerably good inn: now and then at a great distance I saw a solitary spire: all is an immense and boundless waste. It is part of the great plain I lately mentioned.

But though it is only sown here and there with corn, yet it is not lost; it feeds immense quantities of cattle. Their hardy keepers stay out with them, covered with their rough sheep-skin clothing, weeks together. It is chiefly amongst these herdsmen that the custom of besmearing their shirts with hog's lard, and the fat of bacon, with a view to cleanliness, prevails. Thus anointed they can wear them a whole summer without washing, and it is said by this means they are kept free from those creatures "whose hourly food is human gore." Ought we not to consider this as a proof of the greater sensibility of the *Pulex irritans*, *Pediculus humanus* & *pubis*, than of man—or at least of these men?

Some large birds of prey were very common on this waste; in one place I saw fifteen together. I suppose they were vultures: they are at times so bold as to dispute a carcase with the herdsman's dogs. My driver assured me, that, a few days before, a herdsman had killed one with his stick, which had driven away his dogs that were feeding on a dead ox. In some places this waste is marshy: here water-fowl abound. I shot from my carriage a *Glareolus austriacus*. These birds were very common, and no ways shy. The immensity of this plain, its birds of prey, its herds of cattle, and their rough keepers, form a scene somewhat exotic.

Soon after setting out, a hare crossed the road. I perceived my servant shake his head, and mutter something in a sullen manner. I asked

asked him the cause of this. He said, he was sure a misfortune would happen to some of us, as a hare crossing the road was an ill omen; and he himself had seen the vulgar opinion justified by misfortunes happening after such an occurrence. As the greatest misfortune I had ever met with in my travels was a bad meal, or, what was worse, no meal at all, to which I was now pretty well inured, I was not much alarmed; though I could not help saying, that I should much rather have seen the evil omen on the spit, and still more on the table weltering in its gore represented by currant jelly. Yet, strange to tell, soon the omended misfortune happened. The weather was remarkably windy and boisterous the whole day. When we arrived at the half-way-house, the expounder of omens opened the great folding-doors of the barn to let my carriage in; but a violent squall of wind came and blew them to, and caught his fingers between them, and his foot underneath, and in this situation he remained till I could get to his assistance. My driver calmly looked on, and rather smiled on seeing the tips of his fingers peeping out between the doors: he never offered to go to his assistance. Should twenty such omens in future remain unaccomplished, this will never, I dare say, prevent the fears of this man on the occurring of such appearances. I do not know whether this superstition exists with us: but it is very ancient; it is mentioned in a very old Latin treatise called *Lagographia*.