

"Longman's Magazine"
London, 1887 April.

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The Ballad of Ferencz Rényi.

HUNGARY, 1848.

THIS is the story of Rényi,
And when you have heard it through,
Pray God He send no trial like his
To try the faith of you.

And if his doom be upon you,
Then may God grant you this:
To fight as good a fight as he,
And win a crown like his!

He was strong and handsome and happy,
Beloved and loving and young,
With eyes that men set their trust in,
And the fire of his soul on his tongue.

He loved the Spirit of Freedom
He hated his country's wrongs,
He told the patriots' stories,
And he sang the patriots' songs.

With mother and sister and sweetheart
His safe glad days went by,
Till Hungary called on her children
To arm, to fight, and to die.

' Good-bye to mother and sister;
Good-bye to my sweet sweetheart;
I fight for you—you pray for me,
We shall not be apart!'

The women prayed at the sunrise,
They prayed when the skies grew dim;
His mother and sister prayed for the Cause,
His sweetheart prayed for him.

THE BALLAD OF FERENCZ RENYI.

For mother and sister and sweetheart,
 But most for the true and the right,
 He low laid down his own life's hopes
 And led his men to fight.

Skirmishing, scouting, and spying,
 Night-watch, attack, and defeat;
 The resolute, desperate fighting,
 The hopeless, reluctant retreat.

Ruin, defeat, and disaster,
 Capture and loss and despair,
 And half of his regiment hidden,
 And only this man knew where!

Prisoner, fast bound, sore-wounded,
 They brought him roughly along,
 With his body as weak and broken
 As his spirit was steadfast and strong.

Before the Austrian general—
 'Where are your men?' he heard;
 He looked black death in its ugly face
 And answered never a word.

'Where is your regiment hidden?
 Speak—you are pardoned straight—
 No? We can find dumb dogs their tongues,
 You rebel reprobate!'

They dragged his mother and sister
 Into the open hall,
 'Give up your men, if these women
 Are dear to your heart at all!'

He turned his eyes on his sister,
 And spoke to her silently;
 She answered his silence with speaking,
 And straight from the heart spoke she.

'If you betray your country
 You spit on our father's name:
 And what is life without honour?
 And what is death without shame?'



THE BALLAD OF FERENCZ RENYI.

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He looked on the mother who bore him,
And her smile was splendid to see;
He hid his face with a bitter cry,
But never a word said he.

'Son of my body—be silent!
My days at the best are few,
And I shall know how to give them,
Son of my heart, for you!'

He shivered, set teeth, kept silence:
With never a plaint or cry
The women were slain before him,
And he stood and saw them die.

Then they brought his lovely beloved,
Desire of his heart and eyes,
'Say where your men are hidden,
Or say that your sweetheart dies.'

She threw her arms about him,
She laid her lips to his cheek:
'Speak! for my sake who love you!
Love, for our love's sake, speak!'

His eyes are burning and shining
With the fire of immortal disgrace—
God—walk with him in the furnace
And strengthen his soul for a space!

Long he looked at his sweetheart,
His eyes grew tender and wet;
Closely he held her to him,
His lips to her lips were set.

'See! I am young! I love you!
I am not ready to die!
One word makes us happy for ever,
Together you and I.'

Her hands round his neck were clinging,
Her lips his cold lips caressed;
He suddenly flung her from him,
And folded his arms on his breast.

THE BALLAD OF FERENCZ RENYI.

She wept, she shrieked, she struggled,
 She cursed him in God's name,
 For the woe of her early dying,
 And for her dying's shame.

And still she stood, and his silence
 Like fire was burning him through,
 Then the muskets spoke once, and ~~she~~ ^{she} silent
 And she was silent too.

They turned to torture him further,
 If further might be ~~in vain~~
 He had held his peace in that threefold ~~hell~~
 And he never spoke again.

The end of the uttermost anguish
 A human soul could bear,
 Was the madhouse where tyrants bury
 The broken shells of despair.

By the heaven renounced at her altar,
 By the hell thrice braved for her sake,
 By the tears of madness and silence,
 By the heart that her enemies brake.

By the young life's promise ruined,
 By the years of too living death,
 By the passionate self-devotion,
 And the absolute perfect faith.

By the thousands who know such anguish,
 And share such divine renown,
 Who have borne them bravely in battle,
 And won the conqueror's crown.

By the torments her children have suffered,
 By the blood that her martyrs will give,
 By the deaths men have died in her service,
 By these shall our Liberty live!

By the silence of tears, in the burden
 Of the wrongs we some day will repay,
 Live the brothers who died in all ages
 For the Freedom we live for to-day!

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