

THE GREAT EVENTS

BY

FAMOUS HISTORIANS

A COMPREHENSIVE AND READABLE ACCOUNT OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY. EMPHASIZING THE MORE IMPORTANT EVENTS. AND PRESENTING THESE AS COMPLETE NARRATIVES IN THE MASTER-WORDS OF THE MOST EMINENT HISTORIANS

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ON THE PLAN EVOLVED FROM A CONSENSUS OF OPINIONS GATHERED FROM THE MOST DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS OF AMERICA AND EUROPE. INCLUDING BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS BY SPECIALISTS TO CONNECT AND EXPLAIN THE CELEBRATED NARRATIVES. ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY. WITH THOROUGH INDICES. BIBLIOGRAPHIES. CHRONOLOGIES. AND COURSES OF READING

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THE GOLDEN BULL, "HUNGARY'S MAGNA CHARTA," SIGNED

A.D. 1222

E. O. S.

During the century preceding the reign of Andrew II, King of Hungary, which began in 1205, that country had been engaged in frequent wars with Venice over the possession of Dalmatia, but no event of recent years had given much importance to Hungarian history. The reign of Andrew began in a time of great confusion in state and church, when the crusading spirit was still a power which both religious and secular rulers found it convenient to turn to the advancement of their own designs.

When Andrew deserted the cause of the crusaders in Palestine, after an unsuccessful attack upon a tower on Mount Tabor, he was doubtless piqued at the failure of the King of Jerusalem to render him any support in ordering his affairs at home, where, under his viceroy, the virtual absolutism of the government had become endangered. Out of the conditions which confronted him on his arrival in Hungary came the memorable event-forming one of the great chapters in his country's annals faithfully and succinctly recounted in the following pages.

THE reign of Andrew II, in Hungary, forms one of the most important epochs in the history of the country over which he reigned, since from him the nobles obtained their Golden Bull (*Bulla Aurea*), equivalent to the Magna Charta of England. The people of Hungary had, indeed, by their own determination and spirit of independence, and by the wisdom and virtue of the first kings of the race of Arpad, secured in their constitution the foundation of their liberties; but the power of the sovereign had in the mean time increased, so as to surpass those limits within which alone the office can be conducive to the happiness and welfare of the community. The ceremony of coronation was considered, indeed, a necessary condition for the exercise of the royal authority; but though this in some measure acted as a check upon his inordinate power, still all offices and dignities were in the gift of the King, few, if any, being hereditary, and

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even the magnates could not prevent the monarch giving away any part of his dominions.

Wars with Russia and Poland occupied the first years after the accession of Andrew, and much discontent was occasioned in the country by the imperious character of Gertrude his Queen, who ruled over her husband, and caused her relatives and friends to be raised to the highest places in the State. The marriage of the young princess Elizabeth to Louis, son of the Landgrave of Thuringia, was solemnized with great pomp at Presburg (Pozsony), in 1212. The period of prosperity to Hungary which had followed the birth of this child made the people look upon her as one favored by heaven, and her singular virtues helped to confirm the superstition; her life has formed the groundwork of one of the most beautiful of saintly legends, and after her death she was canonized as St. Elizabeth of Hungary.

At her nuptials, Queen Gertrude, assuming the authority of her husband, not only presented the ambassadors of the Landgrave with rich presents of gold, silver, and jewels, but bid them tell their lord that if a long life were granted to her she would send them still greater wealth. The following year Andrew accompanied his son Coloman into Poland, to celebrate his marriage with a daughter of the duke, and intrusted the regency during his absence to Gertrude and her relations. Time and opportunity favored a conspiracy against the imperious Queen, and the first attack was made on her brother, the Archbishop of Colocza (Kalocsa). He, however, escaped with his life, and in revenge he induced the Pope (Honorius) to lay Hungary under an interdict.

The people, however, showed small regard for the denunciations of a distant pontiff, and, irritated by fresh offences, committed by brothers of the Queen, in which Gertrude herself appeared to have participated, they murdered her in her own palace, and her children only escaped by the care and fidelity of their tutor. Their uncles fled from the country, carrying with them a large amount of treasure collected by Andrew, who bitterly complained of their ingratitude in a letter to the holy see.

The King shortly afterward married the daughter of Peter of Courtenay, Count of Auxerre, and made a vow to raise another

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crusade. The Latin Emperor of Constantinople dying about this time, the choice of a successor lay between the Hungarian King and his new father-in-law. It fell upon Andrew, and he was invited to take possession of the imperial crown, but was dissuaded from accepting the honor by Pope Honorius, who had already crowned Peter emperor of the East. Peter was opposed by Theodore Comnenus, by whom he was arrested and thrown into a dungeon. The Pope appealed for assistance to Andrew, then on his way to the Holy Land. Andrew accordingly proceeded to Acre, which he reached after a long voyage, but his expedition partook more of a pilgrimage than of a crusade. He was absent from Hungary four years, and returned to find the whole kingdom in disorder, the treasury emptied, and greedy prelates and magnates devouring the substance of the people.

To replenish his treasury, Andrew appropriated the gold and jewels left by the empress Constantia, whose death, which took place about this time, prevented her establishing her claim. He further supplied his own extravagance, by fanning the taxes to Jews, deteriorating the coin, mortgaging the domains belonging to the fortified castles, and selling the crown lands to wealthy magnates. .

His eldest son Bela had already gained the respect and affection of the people by the firmness of his character and his love of justice; and Andrew, jealous of his popularity, obliged him to fly the kingdom and seek protection from Leopold, Duke of Austria. The King was, however, at last persuaded to invite him to return, and, in order to secure his throne, he established him at a distance from himself, in the government of Croatia and Dalmatia. Two years later his younger son Coloman took the place of Bela, who was intrusted with the government of Transylvania and of all the country between the Theiss and Aluta. With a weak monarch and an exhausted treasury, the land had become the prey of barbarous invaders, and the disorders of the kingdom had reached such a climax that the magnates resolved to appeal to the mediation of the Pope. .

Honorius commanded Andrew to restore the lands, which he had parted with in direct violation of his coronation oath, by which he had sworn to preserve the integrity of the kingdom

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and the honor of the crown. Bela now assembled the nobles and franklins of Hungary, and, supported by them, demanded the restoration of the ancient constitution. The ecclesiastics of Hungary, instigated by the Pope, offered to mediate a peace between the King, who was supported by the great magnates, and his san, which had the voice of the people. The condition of this peace was the Golden Bull of Hungary, which was granted in the year 1222. It was here enacted that, "As the liberties of the nobility, and of certain other natives of these realms, founded by King Stephen the Saint, have suffered great detriment and curtailment by the violence of sundry kings impelled by their own evil propensities, by the cravings of their insatiable cupidity and by the advice of certain malicious persons, and as the 'nobles ' of the country had preferred frequent petitions for the confirmation of the constitution of these realms; so that, in utter contempt of the royal authority, violent discussions and accusations had arisen, . . . the King declares he is now willing to confirm and maintain, for ail times to come, the nobility and freemen of the country in all their rights, privileges, and immunities, as provided by the statutes of St. Stephen.

1. "That the 'nobles ' and their possessions shall not, for the future, be subject to taxes and impositions.

2. "That no man shall be either accused or arrested, sentenced or punished for a crime, unless he receive a legal summons, and until a judicial inquiry into his case shall have taken place.

3. "That though the 'nobles ' and franklins shall be bound to do military service at their own expense, it shall not be legal to force them to cross the frontier of their country. In a foreign war, the king shall be bound to pay the knights and the troops of the counties.

4. "The king has no right to entail whole counties and the high offices of the kingdom.

5. "The king is not allowed to farm to Jews and Ishmaelites his domains, the taxes, the coinage, or the salt mines."

The Golden Bull comprised thirty-one chapters, and seven copies were made and delivered into the keeping of the Knights of St. John, the Knights Templars of Hungary and Slavonia.

the King, the Palatine, the archbishops of Gran (Esztergom) and Colocza (Kalocsa), and the Pope. The thirty-first clause gave every Hungarian noble a right of veto upon the acts of the king if unconstitutional. This clause was, however, supposed to give an undue power to the people, and was revoked in 1687 (by the Habsburg king).

Those magnates who, by the Golden Bull, were 'compelled to return the land unjustly alienated by King Andrew, formed a conspiracy to overthrow the monarchy, abolish the constitution, and divide the land among themselves. The conspiracy was discovered in time to prevent its execution, but Andrew lost courage and did not venture to insist on his refractory nobles fulfilling their part in the conditions of the Great Charter. He was, however, compelled to ratify it in a diet held in Beregher Forest, in 1231, 'where the Golden Bull was signed and sealed with all solemnity in the city of Gran.

Andrew married for a third time in his old age, Beatrice, daughter of the Marquis d'Este, and died in 1234. During his reign the court was first held at a fixed place of residence; it was not only composed of prelates and magnates, but was frequented by learned men, educated at the schools of Paris and - Bologna, as well as within the kingdom. The cities acquired importance about this period, and the condition of the serfs underwent some amelioration.