

G. F. Cushing

THE TWO EARLIEST HUNGARIAN GRAMMARS FOR ENGLISH STUDENTS

One of the more unexpected consequences of the emigration which followed the revolution of 1848–49 was the publication in England of two Hungarian grammars. They appeared almost simultaneously in London. The first, by Sigismund Wékey, who describes himself as 'Late Aide-de-Camp to Kossuth', appeared in 1852 and was entitled 'A Grammar of the Hungarian Language, with Appropriate Exercises, A Copious Vocabulary, and Specimens of Hungarian Poetry'; it was published by Trelawny Saunders of Charing Cross, who also gives the name of the New York publisher as John Wiley. This was followed in 1853 by János Csink's 'A Complete Practical Grammar of the Hungarian Language, with Exercises, Selections from the Best Authors, and Vocabularies, to which is added a Historical Sketch of Hungarian Literature'; Csink's publishers were Williams and Norgate of Covent Garden (who in 1859 published Széchenyi's *Ein Blick auf den anonymen Rückblick*). Csink had been a teacher in Hungary; he describes himself as 'Formerly Elected as Ordinary Professor of Technical Sciences at the Protestant School of Kesmark'. Little is known about either author; Wékey emigrated to the Antipodes not long after the appearance of his grammar, and Csink disappeared from the scene as suddenly as he had emerged.¹

Both grammars are pioneer works of their kind; there had been descriptions of Hungarian earlier in such works as Bowring's *Poetry of the Magyars* (London, 1830), which devotes some twenty pages of the introduction to it, but no practical grammar had been attempted before. Neither Wékey nor Csink was a linguist, and both of them faced unusual problems: they had to contend with the terminology of the period, both Hungarian and English, which they found barely adequate for their purpose, and they had to work out a suitable method of presentation. That they managed to achieve what they did was highly creditable, especially in view of their relatively short stay in England before publication.

Wékey divides his grammar into eleven brief chapters preceded by an introduction, which states that the Hungarian language 'has been unjustly neglected by linguists of the more civilized literary nations' (p. 1), and adds that its strength is proved by the recent developments in Hungarian literature. He also suggests that the Hungarian method of word-derivation by agglutination would make an interesting field of study for the philologist, and gives some examples of this based on the root *ad*.

¹ Szinnyei's *Magyar írók élete és munkái* gives details of Wékey's further literary efforts (XIV, 1055–6).

to Josef Janovic,
from Debrecen to Budapest
via London!

Georg Curling. 17/XI/1980.