

DELPHI  
CLASSICS

Sándor Petőfi

Collected Works

DELPHI POETS SERIES

D E L P H I P O E T S S E R I E S

**Sándor Petőfi**

(1823-1849)



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*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*

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DELPHI POETS SERIES

**Sándor Petőfi**



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Contact: [sales@delphiclassics.com](mailto:sales@delphiclassics.com)

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## NOTE



When reading poetry on an eReader, it is advisable to use a small font size and landscape mode, which will allow the lines of poetry to display correctly.



## The Life and Poetry of Sándor Petőfi



*Kiskőrös, a town in Bács-Kiskun, situated between the Danube and Tisza rivers — Sándor Petőfi, the national poet of Hungary, was born here on New Year's Day 1823.*



*Petőfi's birthplace*

## Brief Introduction: Sándor Petőfi by William N. Loew



Alexander Petőfi is Hungary's greatest lyric poet and one of the truly great singers of sweet song of the civilized world. Grimm the great German literary essayist, names Petőfi as one of the five greatest poets of the world.

Slowly, but surely his fame grows. If Petőfi had a translator of his lyrics into English as competent as Shakespeare had to translate his dramas into the languages of the European continent, then Petőfi would be universally recognized as the great poet of all of the world's poetical literature.

Many are called — few are Godborn sons of song and only a true poet can translate well.

In the preface to a former volume of mine I earnestly protested against being charged with the conceit of considering myself a poet.

I confessed then and I repeat it here, that I do not claim that my heart and soul are warmed by the holy flame lit by the Muses: — no, only my undying love for my native country, my boundless admiration for Petőfi inspire me to do some "missionary" work in introducing him to Anglo-American readers.

For nearly half a century I have been trying to make him and his poetical genius known here in the United States.

In the early 70's I wrote for Professor Rasmus Anderson of the University of Wisconsin a story of the life of Petőfi and sent him a dozen or more of my earliest Petőfi translations. He was to use my contribution as a preface to his translation of Petőfi's novel "The Hangman's Rope". A few years later I translated a number of Magyar Folk Songs, among them some of Petőfi's, for Francis Korbay, the foremost resident-musician of Magyar birth then living in New York, to be used by him in the transcriptions of Magyar Folk Songs he was then publishing. I did similar work, later on, for our dear old Edward Reményi and for Maximilian Vogrich.

Petőfi's gloriously great poem "One thought torments me" — appeared for the first time in the "Critic", just launched by the late Richard Watson Gilder, one of America's great poets.

In 1881 I published my "Gems from Petőfi etc." — and in 1883 I lectured before a body of Hungarians, at the city of Cleveland, on "Alexander Petőfi". The committee having the lecture in charge published it and devoted the proceeds of the sale to a charitable object. Even to-day, after twenty-nine years, there still rings in my ear the cheer caused by a passage in that lecture of mine which enthused my hearers: "Every smile, every tear of his was a poem".

Then I published a volume of "Magyar Songs" and later a volume of "Magyar Poetry", two anthologies of Magyar lyrics, both containing a number of my Petőfi translations.

No one is more thoroughly aware than I am of the immense distance between the Magyar Petőfi and the English Petőfi as the latter is made known to the reader by my translations. However, I claim one merit. My translations may not be classic reproductions, may not be poetic creations showing Petőfi's true genius, however, I think, that I succeeded in producing — *con amore* — faithful photographs.

English students of Magyar literature will in the course of time do better and at some future day all of the world shall recognize the truth of John H. Ingram's opinion:



“Petőfi is the world’s greatest lyric poet, he who, to my mind is more the representative spirit and soul of Hungary than any man has yet been of that country.”

Until, however, Petőfi has the good fortune to find a Bayard Taylor or a H. W. Longfellow to make him feel at home in Anglo-American literature, the undersigned thought best to do something to counter effect the possible opinion of the English literary world of Petőfi’s worth and value as a poet, if based solely on the alleged translations of Sir John Bowring — .

Fortunately there are other Petőfi translators. E. D. Butler, Henry Phillipps Jr. (an American) and Frederick Walter Fuller have done magnificent work, but all the three put together have given only — I think — a score or so of Petőfi’s songs to England and America.

Petőfi’s recognition by England and America as the world’s great lyric poet is still to come. He had German, French and Italian translators who endeared him to their respective countries and enriched their own literatures by giving them a Petőfi of their own.

If my present work adds but a single leaflet to the wreath of immortality of his high fame “which nothing can cover but heaven”, then indeed I am a proud and happy man.

\* \* \*

“The Apostle” is a dream of Petőfi’s, “a series of boldly drawn pictures,” an epic poem of democratic convictions. Petőfi’s conception of the world might be summed up thus: “Mankind is continually developing. A grape is a small thing, yet it requires a whole summer to ripen it. How many thousands of sunrays have touched a single berry. How many millions may the world need! The rays which ripen the world are the souls of men. Every great soul is such a ray—”

“Guide John” is the most truly Magyar fabulous fairy story ever told.

“Simple Steve” is — Petőfi, the light-hearted, easy going, good-natured, loveable and loving youth, full of animal spirit, with a heart of gold.

These three epics are not “the great epics” of Magyar literature, but they are perfect gems of Petőfian view of life, humor, pathos.

The “Cypress ‘Leaves from dear Ethel’s Grave” are heartrending outbursts of a grief at the loss of one sweetheart, soon exchanged for another, who then inspired him to sing other rhapsodies of love...

The hundred odd “selected lyrics” added to these aforementioned translations, make a fairly representative volume of an English Petőfi.

\* \* \*

In December 1910 I lectured before a Magyar Society, “The First Hungarian Literary Society of New York City”, an ambitious body of young Magyar-Americans. I spoke in memory of Coloman Mikszâth, Hungary’s great humorous writer, the Mark Twain of my native land.

In the course of my remarks I said: “Mikszâth was to Francis Deák’s Hungary what Petőfi had been to the Hungary of Kossuth”; and speaking then of Petőfi, I suggested the propriety of a movement to be undertaken by them, — the members of the Hungarian Society I was then addressing — to erect here, in New York City, a statue in honor of Alexander Petőfi, the great bard of love and liberty.

The suggestion was enthusiastically acted upon. A committee was appointed entrusted with the carrying out the idea. This volume is my contribution to that

monument. The "Hungarian Literary Society of New York" accepted my contribution and undertook the publication of the volume, the net proceeds of the sale thereof going to the "Monument-Fund".

As an interesting historical fact I must be allowed to mention here, that Alexander Petőfi's original "Cypress Leaves From the Grave of Dear Ethel" was first published by a patriotic society, the "Nemzeti Casino", induced to do so at the suggestion of Michael Vorosmarty, whose opinion as to Petőfi's poetical genius was more readily accepted by the magnates of the Magyar Casino, than by the Magyar publishers of Pest, who were not willing to print the poems of a then unknown author.

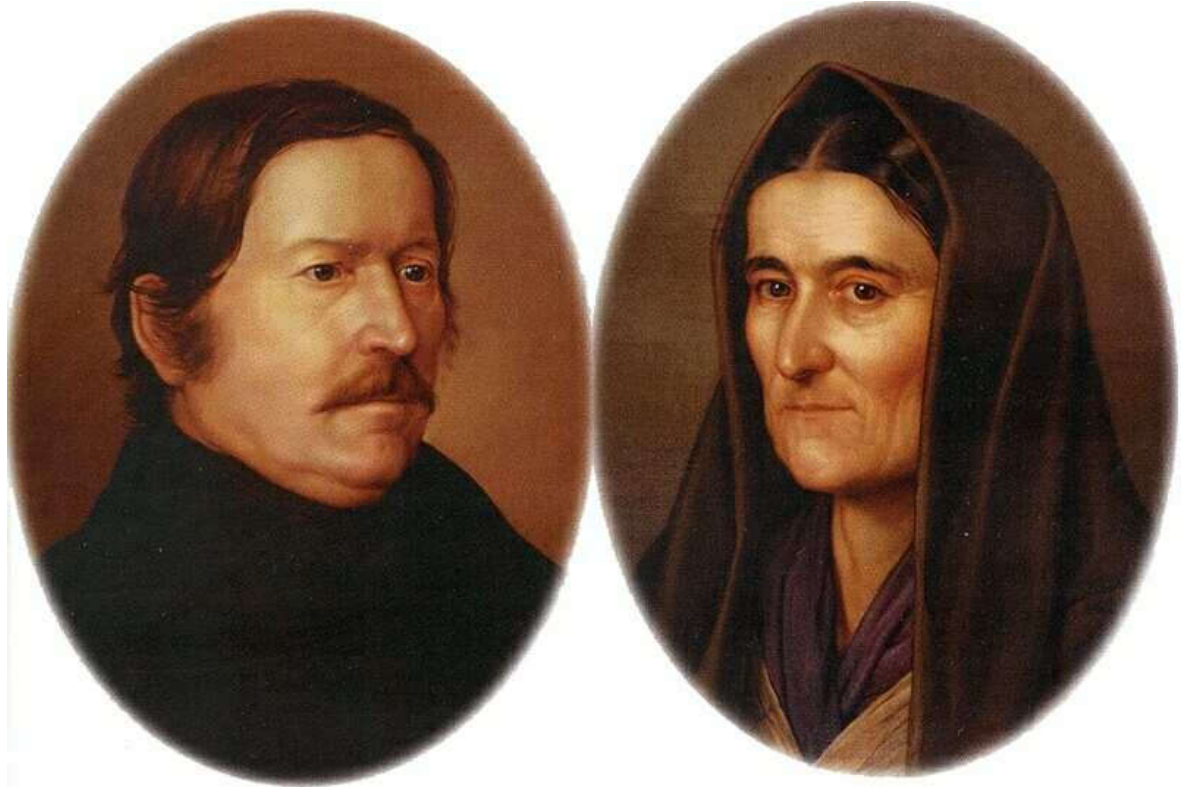
The net proceeds of the sale of the second edition of the "Cypress Leaves" Petőfi dedicated to a charitable object.

\* \* \*

Let me hope, that by the time the literary world celebrates the centenary of Petőfi's birthday, the Magyar Societies of New York and if the United States, assisted by the lovers of song of all other races, will gather around that statue, then already erected, to place wreaths of laurel upon the pedestal of his monument, and that in the hearts of the thousands then and there assembled will re-echo Petőfi's famous song:

"Freedom and love  
Are dear to me;  
My life I give  
Sweet love for thee  
Yet love I give  
For liberty!"

New York, March 15th, 1912.  
WM. N. LOEW.



*The poet's parents painted by Petrich Soma Orlay. His father, István Petrovics, was a village butcher, innkeeper and second-generation Serb. His mother, Mária Hruz, was a servant and laundress before her marriage. She was of Slovak descent and spoke Hungarian with an accent.*



*Júlia Szendrey, Petőfi's wife*

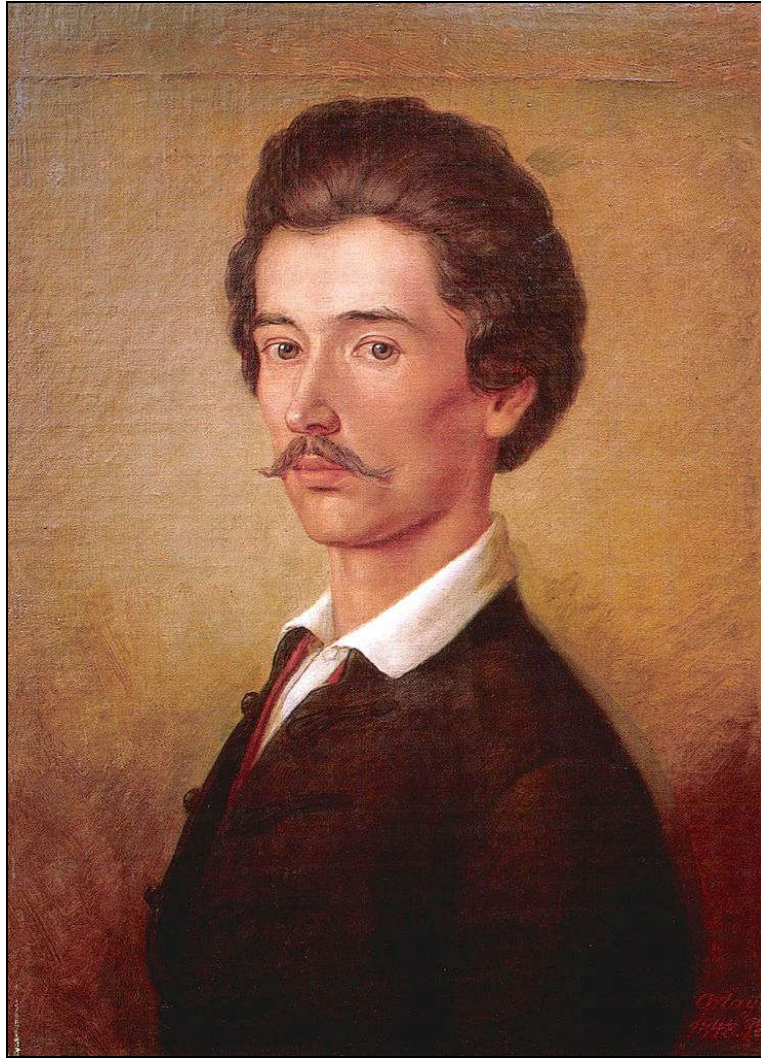


*Petőfi's daguerreotype, 1844*





*The Polish Liberal General Józef Bem, c. 1844 — Petőfi joined the Hungarian Revolutionary Army and fought under General Bem in the Transylvanian army. The army was initially successful against Habsburg troops, but after Tsar Nicholas I of Russia intervened to support the Habsburgs, it was defeated.*



*Petőfi by Soma Orlai Petrich, Hungarian National Museum, 1840*

## Collected Works of Sándor Petőfi



*Translated by William N. Loew, 1912*

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## **THE APOSTLE.**

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*End of Sample*