

Miklós Nadasdi's Sándor Petőfi Anthology 2
Nine poems of Sándor Petőfi translated from the Hungarian original
into English by Miklós Nadasdi

It is not possible to forbid a flower
 In the souvenir book of a bookseller
 To my brother Steven
 Winter world
 To the parliament
 I love you my darling
 Poets of the 19th century
 If you are a man, be a man
 Autumn is here again

SÁNDOR PETŐFI, one of the greatest Hungarian poets, was born on January 1, 1823, in Kiskoros. Hungary. He disappeared on the battlefield and probably died on July 31, 1849, in Segesvar, Transylvania.

Petőfi studied at eight different schools, joined for a short time a group of strolling players, and enlisted as a private soldier, but because of ill health was soon dismissed from the army.

Petőfi's first poem was published in 1842. In 1844, on the recommendation of Mihály Vörösmarty, then the leading Hungarian poet, he became an assistant editor of the literary periodical *Pesti Divatlap*. His first volume of poetry, *Versek*, appeared in the same year.

In 1847 he married Julia Szendrey, who inspired his best love poems. After 1847, together with Mór Jókai, he edited the magazine *Életképek*

Petőfi's poems glowed with political passion, and one of them, "Talpra magyar" ("Rise, Hungarian"), written on the eve of the revolution, became its anthem.

During the revolution he became the aide-de-camp of Gen. Jozef Bem, then head of the Transylvanian army. Petőfi disappeared during the Battle of Segesvár, July 31, 1849, and was assumed to have died in the fighting, though his body was never discovered.

(Extracted from an entry written by the Editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica.)

MIKLÓS NÁDASDI was born on January 29, 1932, in Budapest, Hungary. He received an M.D. degree at the Semmelweis University of Budapest in 1956, the same year when, during a revolution against the Soviet regime, he escaped from Hungary to Vienna. The following year he immigrated to Canada with the sponsorship of Hans Selye, the scientist who developed the stress theory. He worked as his postgraduate student at the University of Montreal where he obtained A Ph.D. degree in experimental medicine. This followed 34 scientific publications. In 1964 he moved to Toronto and became the vice president of medical affairs of Glaxo, a large international pharmaceutical company (now GSK). He also established a medical practice as a staff member of the North York General Hospital in Toronto. He is married, has two children, four grandchildren and a great-grandchild. Presently he is retired and lives with his wife in Toronto.

IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO FORBID A FLOWER

It is not possible to forbid a flower
To bloom in Spring when it has the power.
Love is the flower, the girl is the Spring,
It blooms in Spring, it is a given thing.

Babe, since I first saw you I couldn't love you more,
I became the lover of your beautiful soul.
Your beautiful soul that tenderly smiles
In the mirror of your enchanting eyes.

There is a secret question in my heart:
Do you love me or someone else, sweetheart?
These thoughts chase each other in my brain,
Like clouds chase the sunbeam in the Autumn rain.

Oh, if I knew that your lovely rosy cheeks
Bathing in milk, wait for someone else's kiss,
In this big world I would become an exile,
Or rather desperately choose to die.

Star of my happiness, shed on me some light
So that my life should not be a sad night,
Love me, pearl of my heart, I don't ask for more,
And I ask god to give his blessings to your soul.

IN THE SOUVENIR BOOK OF A BOOKSELLER

Life is a bliss but first of all
You must work hard for this goal.
Free of charge you won't get it
You must struggle quite a bit.
Never lose sight of honesty

For anger or a modest fee.
 Truly love your fellow men
 Keep the bridge open for them.
 Your dear homeland you should guard
 In a pure spot of your heart
 And sustain your love of god
 Once my poems sold a lot.

TO MY BROTHER STEVEN

Well, how is everything at home, my Stevie?
 Do you ever happen to think about me?
 Do you ever say after your supper
 And have a lighthearted chat together,
 Do you ever say during the evening:
 I wonder how our Sándor is feeling?
 Otherwise tell me how is your life.
 I know your workdays are full of strife,
 You are all struggling for your basic needs,
 Just to be able to make ends meet.
 Our poor father, he is so credulous,
 He lost all his savings to fraudulence,
 He thought everyone was honest like him
 This is how he became their helpless victim
 And lost the fruits of his strenuous work
 What others enjoy now, undeserved.
 Why am I not a bit favored by god
 So that I could help my father somewhat?
 How happy I would be if I had the means
 I would relieve his burden by all means.
 This is what makes my life so bitter,
 Since I cannot make his older years easier.
 Show him that you are his loving son
 And make his life for him less troublesome.
 Do everything what your strength permits,
 Help him whatever way you see fit.
 Help him the best way you can do,
 You will see, god will help you too.
 And our mother, this wonderful, sweet mother,
 Love, respect and adore her, Stevie, my dear brother!
 What our mother means to us, words cannot tell,
 But without words we still know it very well.
 Her loss would show us and break our heart
 If heaven would call her and she would depart.
 Well, be content with these few words, brother.
 I wanted to write a more cheerful letter.
 This sombre, gloomy, desperate voice

Was not really my original choice.
 If I would attempt to continue in this vein
 My heart would break from the ensuing pain.
 My next letter will be more cheerful and less brief,
 I wish that god bless you, my dear brother, Steven.

WINTER WORLD

Somebody killed himself tonight
 That is why the stormy wind blows
 And the plate is dancing madly
 Above the barber shop windows.
 Where is happiness nowadays?
 In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

The day-labourer and his wife
 Work on logs, chopping and sawing,
 Their child wrapped in a fleecy swaddle clothe
 Has a shrilling game with the wind.
 Where is happiness nowadays?
 In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

The soldier on his beat of sentry
 Takes long strides up and down
 While counting every one of his steps:
 It does not seem to be much fun.
 Where is happiness nowadays?
 In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

The long-legged wandering tinker,
 His shabby cape he can hardly hold,
 His nose is like a ripe red pepper,
 His eyes full of tears from the cold.
 Where is happiness nowadays?
 In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

The itinerant actor is strolling
 From one village to another;
 He has no warm garment at all,
 Nevertheless he is starving, no bother.
 Where is happiness nowadays?
 In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

And the gypsy?...his teeth chatter
 Under the ragged tent,
 The wind knocks, then bursts in
 Without the gypsy's intent.

Where is happiness nowadays?
In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

Somebody killed himself tonight,
That is why the stormy wind blows
And the plate is dancing madly
Above the barber shop windows.
Where is happiness nowadays?
In a cozy, warm, friendly place.

TO THE PARLIAMENT

You speak much and you speak nice
But for our land it's not enough sustenance.
You have problems with your proceeding
Because you don't start things at the beginning.
This has been your ongoing story
If you look through your past history.
Can you imagine if any people
Would start to build a church with the steeple?
And keep pushing it up in the air
Hoping that it would stay up there,
Then the wall under it would be the next station,
Finally at the bottom lay down the foundation.
What a craftsmanship, you don't know any better,
This is why the country gives you bread and butter,
This is why it pays you with its heart and blood!
You would do much better if you would not
Do anything, you just waste energy and time,
Perhaps you show a tiny success some time,
The same way as if I would suffer from thirst
They gave me not water but food which is worse.
So, by kindly pretending to help me
Instead they make me feel even more thirsty.
If this is success and called good deed:
I left my brain in the cradle indeed.
But it is useless to have the talk adorned,
If you don't take the bull by the horns
And commence everything right at the start
With freedom of the press what people demand.
Freedom of the press is what we should get,
Freedom of the press, we cannot do without that.
For the nation these words weigh a lot,
Like the word "become" was for god.
This was what he used with all his force
When he created the universe.
A nation without this, even if opulent

By extorting gold from servant and peasant,
 That nation has nothing that makes it better,
 That nation can be called only a beggar,
 But a nation that has it, though its people smitten
 With misery, in rags, poverty stricken,
 That country's wealth is nevertheless immense
 Because it has a future for inheritance.
 We wish to advance, but can we really?
 My god, we are so terribly silly!
 Our feet move freely but our eyes are shut,
 We would fly in the sky but got stuck in the mud.
 The spirit is chained and chokes in putrid air
 Which is already rotting in its own despair.
 The spirit is in chains like the wretched dog
 Is chained behind the house, bound into a knot,
 And while chewing the chain, its teeth have broken,
 The teeth it should use to defend the homeland.
 The spirit is in prison and we stick our neck out
 And claim ourselves a free land -- a mockery no doubt!
 We are servants, worse than slaves, what a shame,
 The world is looking at us with utter disdain!

I LOVE YOU MY DARLING

I love you my darling,
 I love your slim body,
 Your ivory forehead,
 Your hair like ebony,
 Your sparkling dark eyes
 And your rosy cheeks,
 Your tender, soft hands
 And your sweet, full lips.
 I love your soul
 That can fly so high
 And the mountain-lake depth
 Of your warm heart.
 I love you when you're smiling
 Because you are glad,
 Or with tears in your eyes
 Because you are sad.
 I love your virtues
 Shining so bright
 And also your faults
 That are never in sight.
 I love you my darling,
 I love you truly
 As much as one can love,

Deeply, strongly, fully.
You are everything,
There's no life without you,
You enmesh all my thoughts
Steadfast, through and through.
You are all my feelings
Awake or asleep,
You are always present
In my every heart beat.
I would relinquish
All the glory for you
And, if you wanted,
Regain it all anew.
I have no wish
And no will either
Because what you want
Is also my desire.
No sacrifice is too small
Of any measure
If it would give you
Even a small pleasure.
If you would lose something
Small but it would cause pain
It would hurt me as well,
I would feel the same.
I love you my darling,
I love you even more,
I love you like no one
Has loved you before.
I love you my darling
So that it could kill me.
I am all in one
Who can love you dearly:
Husband. son and father
Or your older brother,
I am all those and,
Most of all, your lover.
At the same time
You are also my life,
Mother, daughter, sister,
Lover and my wife!
I love you with my heart,
I love you with my soul,
I love you with dreamy,
Crazy love and more!...
And if one deserves
A praise or a prize
For all what I said,

Those of any size,
 The praise and the prize
 Whatever may be,
 You deserve it all,
 You alone -- not me.
 You deserve it all
 Because the love I feel.
 You made it all real!

POETS OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Nobody should start thoughtlessly
 Strumming the strings at a whim
 When getting hold of a lyre
 For it will place a great burden on him.
 If the only thing you can do is
 To sing your own joy and pain,
 The world does not need you at all,
 Your efforts are totally in vain.

We are wandering in a desert,
 Moses and his people did the same
 And followed what god sent him
 To lead them: A pillar of flame.
 Nowadays god wants us poets
 To be this blazing pillar and
 Lead all peoples to that place
 Known as the Promised Land.

Forward, on with it, all you poets,
 Lead them through water and fire,
 Curse upon those not willing
 To hold the banner ever higher!
 Curse upon those who are coward,
 Or just too lazy to go with the rest
 And while those sweat, fight and struggle,
 They lie in the shade taking a rest!

There are many phony poets who
 Forever viciously preach
 That we can stop now because
 The Promised Land is reached.
 This is a lie, a dirty lie
 That millions can negate,
 Those who suffer from thirst and hunger
 Living in a wretched state.

When from the basket of plenty
 Everyone will have an equal share,
 When at the table of human rights
 Everybody will have a chair,
 When in every house the free spirit
 Is allowed to be a friend,
 Then we will be able to say, halt,
 We are in the Promised Land.

And until then? We cannot be quiet,
 Until then the fight must go on.
 Perhaps we shall not get from life
 Payment for what we have done,
 But death will come with a gentle kiss
 To close our eyes and make it worth,
 Then we'll descend on a rope of flowers
 And silk cushion into the earth.

IF YOU ARE A MAN, BE A MAN

If you are a man, be a man
 Not a puppet, worthless, weak
 That destiny can toss around
 For the pleasure it may seek.
 Fate is a coward bitch that yelps,
 Runs away from the brave
 Who is willing to face it,
 So don't capitulate!

If you are a man, be a man,
 Mere words alone are useless.
 Action speaks far better
 Than any Demosthenes.
 Build or destroy like a storm
 And be silent when you are done,
 Like the storm when it is finished
 Quietly dies down.

If you are a man, be a man,
 Have principles and faith,
 Adhere to them steadfast
 For whatever it takes.
 Rather give up your life
 A hundred times more
 Than deny yourself
 And lose your honor.

If you are a man, be a man,
 Guard your independence,
 Don't ever sell it for
 All the world's abundance.
 Despise those who for a fat meal
 Are willing to sell themselves.
 Your slogan should always be:
 "Beggar-staff and independence!"

If you are a man, be a man,
 Be strong, be brave, be firm,
 This way you can be certain
 Neither man nor fate can do you harm.
 Be an oak that, by a storm,
 Might sometimes be felled
 But its awesome solid trunk
 The wind could never bend.

AUTUMN IS HERE AGAIN

Autumn is here again,
 So pleasing to the eye,
 I like it so much,
 Although I don't know why.

I sit on top of the hill
 And look around from there,
 Listening to the leaves
 Falling everywhere.

The gentle sun is shining
 Down on earth with a smile,
 Like a caring mother watching
 Her dear sleeping child.

Indeed, in autumn the earth
 Only sleeps, it goes still;
 One can see it in its eyes,
 Just sleepy, not ill.

It took off its fancy clothes,
 It quietly undressed
 To dress up again in the morn,
 So spring will be impressed.

Sleep beautiful nature,
 Sleep until daybreak,

Have a pleasant dream
To enjoy when you awake.

My fingers are quietly plucking
The strings of my lyre
And start playing my wistful song,
As your lullaby.

Come my love, sit next to me
Listen silently until my song
Like the whispering wind
Glides over the pond.

When you kiss me and your lips
Touch me, watch out, be tender,
Don't wake up kind nature
From her dream-filled slumber.

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