

in mid-air; now a river or a lake, with stretches of sandy beach, and masts of vessels, tall trees and copses reflected in the water."

Though, as a rule, almost perfectly level, the aspect of the Alföld varies considerably; and it is often marvellously fertile. Apparently the soil is alluvial, and shafts five hundred feet deep have failed to pierce through the immense deposit. Stone is almost as rare as gold; and there is a report that chance pebbles are treasured up as heir-looms from generation to generation. But wheat, poppies, flax, maize, and other products, ripen to harvests that an English farmer would deem fabulous. These crops, moreover, are produced in spite of summer droughts and winter inundations. The droughts are partly attributed to the absence of trees; and if so, a few years may witness an alteration. But the other evil is less easy to cure. Year by year the beds of the river silt up, and the artificial embankments are compelled to assume larger proportions. Then comes a sudden thaw on the higher Carpathians, and no barrier, however strong, can resist the pressure of the waters. The dykes burst, and the Alföld becomes a vast inland sea.

"There is also another phenomenon prejudicial to the interests of the agriculturists. The rivers flow subterraneously. In dry seasons they drain the soil by drawing down its moisture to themselves; while in rainy seasons the water of the overfull rivers, welling up through the light alluvial soil, converts the plain into a gigantic swamp. Nor is this all. The Danube is continually changing its course; in some instances it has left towns and villages miles distant which were once situated on its banks; while it now flows close to others that at one time were far away."



TYPICAL PROTESTANT
CHURCH, HUNGARY.

Such is this land of paradox. Railways and other modern conveniences are here almost unknown, so the traveller is reduced to the most primitive style of conveyance. Day after day he passes dreamily along, and finds each village to be only a counterpart of its predecessor.

"On through the same kind of pasture; the same waving cornfields; the same villages with their twin churches, Roman Catholic and Calvinist, standing peaceably side by side; the same vague roads which might as well be sheep-tracks; the same dust; the same birds taking their evening bath in the white sand; the same sun, the same sky; the same everything. Yes! and the same melancholy iron crucifix, all on one side, just as we left them hours ago."