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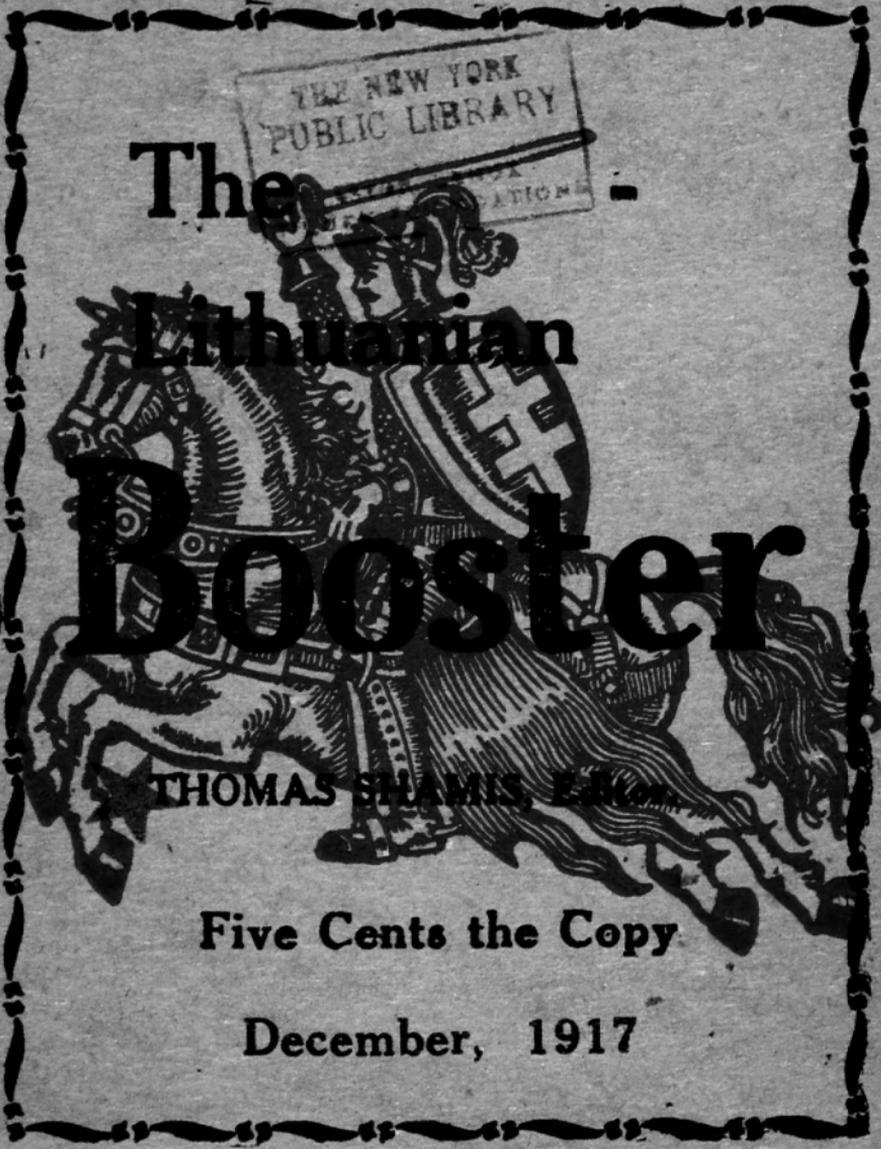
The
Litharian

Booster

THOMAS SHAMIS, Editor

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December, 1917



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THE LITHUANIAN BOOSTER

ABOUT LITHUANIA AND LITHUANIANS

Thomas Shamis, Editor

Entered at Kingston, Pa., P. O. as Second Class Mail Matter.

Vol. 2

December, 1917

No. 7

Christmas Greetings

TO THE
LITHUANIANS

I HAVE stuck it out nearly two years and I am going to stick it out for many more. I know I am right on the Lithuanian movement, as your support prove my claim: That the "The Lithuanian Booster" is for Free and Independent Lithuania. And Lithuanians are going to get FREEDOM.

THOMAS SHAMIS.

DIVIDED

THE Lithuanians speak the purest language which is near to sanskrit. Lithuania in the latter part of the thirteenth century was the largest power in Europe, Lithuania was also the largest in area, about the approximate size of Russia before the war. The Lithuanians crossed from Asia to Europe about the year 2,000 B. C. and settled just southeast of the Baltic sea. As warriors they were said to be equal of the Romans, and this they proved in the fourteenth century when they defeated the entire German army at Grunvald, under the leadership of Grand Duke Vytautas. It was after Vytautas' death that Lithuania began to fall. They united with Poland, and both countries fell before the great armies of Russia, Germany and Austria, who divided their loot to satisfaction. Lithuania was under Russia's rule and under severe restrictions. Germany also has had a small

part, which they call Prussia.

From this world war Lithuania has suffered terribly. When the German army invaded Lithuania, the people were forced to flee to safety. The German army ravaged the country, especially the beautiful city of Vilna. The homes were burned and the crops taken or destroyed. Every Lithuanian from the age of sixteen and up was forced to join the Russian army, while the remaining in Prussia are in the German army, a pitiful case of brother against brother. While women and children forced from their happy homes are probably in the deep, thick forests anxiously looking about for their loved ones who were incidentally separated from them in the hasty retreat. Civilization owes to the Lithuanians a debt as it was the Lithuanians who defeated the wild Mongolian race that sought to destroy civilization.

LITHUANIANS

FROM ancient times the Lithuanians occupied the swamps and level lands covered with endless forests extending from the Baltic sea to the east and south. At the beginning of the eighth century we find that the Romans were already buying amber from the Lithuanians. Their language is recognized by the greatest linguists to be one of the oldest in Europe and that it is closely related to the Sanskrit. A little proof of its antiquity is shown from the fact that like the Greek language, it has retained the "aorist" tense and also the "dual." The Lithuanians belong to the Indo-European group and hold the middle place between the Scandinavians and the Slavs.

During their history they suffered many misfortunes. One of the greatest, in their estimation, at that time, was the loss of their natural religion, their customs, etc. by the intriguing nations that surrounded

them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In order to wipe out paganism from Lithuania, the Teutons formed the Order of the Knights of the Cross, who were similar to the crusaders. Notwithstanding their endless wars with the Order of the Knights of the Cross and the exertions that Russia and Poland forced up them, we find in the fourteenth century that the Lithuanian kingdom had a great army and not only repelled the attacks of their numerous enemies, but also extended their boundaries into Eastern and Southern Europe. At this time Lithuania is rapidly becoming a recognized power and is about three times as large as Poland. When the Lithuanians had cast their longing glances toward Southern Europe, the Orders of Koenigsburg and Marienburg destroyed and practically wiped out a part of Lithuanians, all that remained of them was the name and about three hundred words of their language. Hence all Eastern Germany, which at the present is called Prussia, received its name from the ancient "Prusai"—Lith-

uanians. The Order of the Knights of the Cross charged the Lithuanians so heavily that they were pushed back to the Niemen river. Seeing the great political power of Lithuania and the immense tracts of land belonging to her, Poland, who also suffered from the attacks of the Order of the Knights of the Cross, determined and also carried into effect the marriage of Princess Hedwig of Poland with Prince Jagello of Lithuania. Jagello promised to christianize all Lithuania and to join Poland and Lithuania together on equal terms. He kept his word and carried out his plan. The Lithuanians were baptized in 1386 and was the last of the present Christian nations of Europe to become Christianized. Immediately after being baptized, Polish missionaries began to travel thru Lithuania and preach. but they made a unforgiveable mistake in disregarding the Lithuanian language (*lingua vernacula*) and in forcing the Polish language upon them. As a result of this. Christianity did not receive a strong foothold in Lithuania, so

that still in the seventeenth century more than half of the Lithuanians were pagans. After this union with Poland, Lithuania retained its own power, Princes and government so that all that remained in common to the two nations was the union between them. Unfortunately, however, Poland did not remain loyal and when in 1447 Casimer Jagello was crowned king of Poland, disputes arose as to whether Lithuania should be considered a kingdom as it was before the union with Poland, or as a province of Poland. In order to settle this matter, conventions were held at Lublin and Perceive, in 1448, 1451, 1453, which ended in bloody riots between the Poles and Lithuanians. According to Lithuanian chronicles, the Lithuanians became so exasperated at the intrigues of the Poles that they wished to return the marks of heraldry bestowed upon them by the Poles. At that rate the kingdom of Lithuania remained (*in statu quo*) in the same state in which it was found before the union.

However, from this time on this union began to

weaken and in order to prevent disruption the Poles called a convention at Lublin in 1596. After this, these sharp disputes between the Poles and Lithuanians partly disappeared, which in all probability was due to the fact that the Lithuanian princes and aristocrats having received the marks of heraldry from the Poles began to mix more freely with the Poles and Gudai (inhabitants of White Russia) and also to assimilate their habits and customs. On the other hand the common people, up to the middle of the nineteenth century, were victim of a hard feudal system that existed at that time. To these common people credit must be given that the Lithuanian language and customs have survived. Secretly they practiced their religion so that almost half returned to the worship of their ancient Perun. Here we might mention that this was a direct result of the manner in which the Polish missionaries labored, namely, in the Polish language instead of the Lithuanian language. As time passed this union remain-

ed between the Poles and Lithuanians and they shared their troubles and fortune together. However, the cause of the greatest calamity between these people was the Poles, disease and exaggerated individualism (which fact even Polish historians acknowledge) which manifested itself in all their conventions and by which the "veto" of one titled deputy was sufficient to overthrow and bring to naught all the votes of the others.

This characteristic finally led the Poles to anarchism. This diseased state of the Poles also affected the Lithuanians whose Princes and aristocrats, as fore-mentioned, had assimilated the Polish habits and customs and had become Polonized. The aristocrats of Lithuania having assumed a foreign culture and having ruled the people without allowing the common folk to have a voice, must take the responsibility in history for the loss of their fatherland.

Such being the case, Poland was divided into three parts in 1772 and in 1795 Lithuania became a part of or rather fell under the Russian government. And

a small part of Lithuania fell to Frederick II and became part of his kingdom. The administrative and political power of Lithuania having fallen into the hands of Russia, a new period of Lithuanian history begins.

Under the Russian government, the nineteenth century greeted the Lithuanians with many economical changes. In 1831 the Poles made an effort to regain their lost political liberty, which resulted in a bloody and useless revolution. Again in 1863 they made a last and final attempt to gain their point, but as in 1831 their efforts were fruitless. The Lithuanian common folk were enticed into these revolution by empty promises and as a result the Seat at Vilna was occupied by the Russian governor general, Mouravief, (the Hanger). His first act in that capacity was indeed most barbarous and inhuman. In 1863, by word he forbade the printing with Lithuanian characters of all matter beginning with prayer-books and

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AVIATION

LITHUANIANS could be proud to have aviators among the men folks of this ancient Aryan Tribe, but the height is reached when Lithuanian women are taking interest in aeronautics. "The Lithuanian Booster" has the pleasure of introducing: An aviator — Miss Anna Doraite.

Sketch of Miss Doraite:

Born in America.

Speaks Lithuanian, English, Spanish and Italian languages.

Not afraid to acknowledge the fact that her parents are Lithuanians.

She loves flying. Is a graduate of a prominent Aviation School. Has made many short flying trips. Is planning for a trip to South America. Has invented a new style safety seat for aeroplanes. The invention has been approved by leading aviators.

Her ambition—to become a famous aviator.

Here's Good Luck.

Picture on last page.

WRITING

POLISH propagandists are beginning to get nervous. They see the handwriting on the wall, and the rhetoric is something of a shock. It is quite opposed to the style approved by our Polish propagandists. Indeed, they don't want the Lithuanians to write on the wall in any way. They want them to write on promises—fake promises to meet their fabulous demands of as sbrewd a crowd of rascals as ever lived. The kind of writing the Polish propagandits see now irritates them. It sounds the death knell to their fake "unions." In short, the situation is developing so rapidly and in such a manner that the propagandists are beginning to think. They will think still harder when they learn, as they will that the Lithuanians are sticking together, and are going to stick.

Lithuanians, however, must not sit back and rest believing the fight has been won. The campaign has not started yet, and there is grave danger in un-

derestimating the strength of the opposition. The Polish propagandists are beginning their charge upon the world that their claim is just and with a force that will need all the strength that can be gathered to check it.

The Polish propagandists depend for support upon kingdoms, which, having at the present monarchies who would be pleased to see the line continued. But the peace conference comprising of different nations now fighting for the liberation of smaller nations will bring about the hearing of the Lithuanian. It remains to be seen whether the oppression of the Polish propagandists has made a sufficient dent in the minds of the Lithuanians to arouse them to united action. If it is not then there is no doubt that Polonization will continue its method of strangulation with even a tighter grip.

Lithuanians having the interest of Lithuanian movement at heart will not lay down, but will take stand, work and work, and there will be no rest up till the Polish propagandists are driven out of Lithuania and out of the whole world, and driven into oblivion.

LITHUANIAS GRIEF

BELOVED "Niemen," Lithuania's pride,
 Like the land o'er which you daily must
 glide,
 You are silent and sad and surely you weep
 For your Mother Earth, whose sorrows are deep.
 Oh loved Lithuania, Fatherland ours
 Once known and respected as greatest of powers,
 Invaded by savages now and abused,
 Crucified, tortured, battered and bruised.
 Your glories unnumbered, your fame was world
 wide,
 Your robes were unstained, you had noting to hide;
 Until came the storm, that destroyed your all,
 An avalanche broke and that made you fall.
 The fire and sword that passed over thy head,
 Had mangled and slain till rivers ran red;
 Crushing all that lived and leaving instead
 At thy feet thine own children—bleeding and dead.

But that storm had ceased, the bleeding arose!
 Thy wounds healed—and then, as each nation
 knows
 The spring came again, and summer and all,
 And thou Lithuania, emerged from the fall.
 The dawn came in view, you recovered from grief,
 Like a maiden to wed, you were pleating a wreath;
 Thine white robes completed, thine long tresses
 hung,
 All calmly awaited—till the great bell was rung.
 The war god, the monster, spat fire and smoke,
 And destructive missiles came each time he spoke;
 Ah, 'twas but the beginning of fire and sword,
 The visiting storms and the enemies horde.
 Then for days, weeks and months, the terrific storm
 raged
 Like a monster when freed after long being caged;
 He pranced back and forth according to will,
 Till nearly exhausted, and a moment lay still.

Huge holes ploughed in the soil, the homes are
destroyed,

The harvests left rotting, all efforts are void;
The tombstones are shattered and crosses are bent,
All, all demolished, as though lightning rent.

The rivers flow tears and willows there sway,
For the life that once was, but now brushed away
Only hawks and the crows weirdly fill the air,
With their hollow shrieks as they fly here the there.

Oh Mother Earth dear, now bitten by frost,
What price hast thou paid for thine power lost;
What hast thou done—to deserve such a fate,
Why didst thou incur the All Mighty God's Hate?

But again Mother Earth—where is thy pride,
That thou on thine bosom allow foes to ride?
Where are thy rulers—thy heroes of old?
Thy strongholds—thy arms, and Knights once so
bold.

Thy hopes they are blasted and head bowed in grief,
Thy heart pressed by sorrow, and lost is thy wreath
The war god is resting and soon, who knows?
He may stir again and strike thee new blows.

And ere many weeks pass the shower of shell
May turn thee dear fatherland into a hell;
So weep Niemen weep and sway willows sway,
For much sorrow yet is to come your way.

WILLIAM B. NEUWELLS.



ON THE STEPPES

WOLF stories are told at the Lithuanian fireside. This one is by a traveler, who was traveling thru Lithuania. It was a bright, frosty winter day. The snow was excellent, and the mail sleigh glided forward at great speed. A troika with three Lithuanians in it followed. Toward sunset we emerged from the dark pine woods upon the steppe, which stretched away in front of us as far as eye could reach.

Soon the stars made their appearance, and the moon rose. It was bitterly cold, and the snow crackled beneath the runners. The horses' breath rose in the air like thick smoke. The songs and shouts of the Lithuanians died away, and profound silence reigned.

Suddenly one of the horses whinned, then another, and a third shied violently, uttering that terrible cry

of which the horse is capable only when in extreme fear. I could see by the light of the moon the shadow of an animal about the size a dog flitting over the frozen surface of a marsh pool which lay some twenty paces from us on one side of the road.

No animal can travel more silently than a wolf when in search of prey, and none can attack so suddenly and unexpectedly. I was slowly raising my gun when a second wolf rose immediately in front of the horses with crest erect and green, phosphorescent eyes. At the same time points of light appeared all over the mere, and the howling of the beasts rang out.

A shot was fired. Revolver in hand, Louis one of the Lithuanians, stood on the driving seat of the troika. Then from the mail sleigh I discharged both barrels of my gun, and a savage howl announced that they had taken effect. Two of the most daring of our assailants lay rolling in the snow.

The three Lithuanians kept firing furiously, altho the attack of the wolves was directed more against

our sleigh, probably because it was drawn by double number of horses. Our driver had no other weapon than his loaded whip, but with it he dealt tremendous blows.

The horses struggled madly and tried with all their strength to break the harness. At each shot from my gun the wolves scattered, only to collect again immediately and renew their attack on the horses. Suddenly there arose a wild yell behind us.

The three Lithuanians were rolling in the snow by the side of their overturned sleigh. Louis's badly driven horses had torn themselves loose from the troika in their terror, and were careering wildly over the snow covered steppe, pursued by some of the wolves. They were soon pulled down, and in the stillness of the night their death screams were terrible. The Lithuanians wallowed about in the snow shouting, weeping and lamenting by turns.

Their situation was, indeed, sufficiently serious, for only Louis had enough presence of mind to hide

beneath the sleigh, and the mail driver and I, surrounded by wolves, could give them no help. I looked upon them as doomed and felt sure that we should quickly share their fate.

Suddenly our pursuers disappeared, and although bleeding badly, the horses became calmer. The gleaming eyes of the wolves were seen only here and there out on the steppe. A shot rang out, then a volley, succeeded by yells of pain. A dozen dead wolves lay on the ground, and two huge beasts actually expired beneath the hoofs of the horses as our rescuers came up in their tinkling sleighs.

It was a landed proprietor with his servants whose solitary farm lay only a couple versts away. None of us was dangerously wounded. The wolves had treated the Lithuanians worst, for their clothes were nearly torn from their bodies. They were bitten, too, but not seriously.

The following morning our host, Jonas Stankevicius, came across the skeletons of the three troika

horses scarcely half a verst from the scene of our struggle. The poor creatures were still bound together with the harness. What our own fate would have been were it not for our timely rescue, is not hard to imagine. The thought of it makes me shudder to this day.



HIGH CULTURE ?

LITHUANIAN in the state of forsaking his mother language and customs for that of "Pan" Polish.

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(Continued from page 12)

ending with newspapers. However, since his word of command was not altogether obeyed, in 1864 he issued a decree by which it was considered a crime to print anything in Lithuanian characters. Indeed a bold attempt to destroy the Lithuanian language. He also adopted a system known as "Kyrilica" by which all books, etc., were printed with Russian characters in order to accustom the people to adopt the Russian language and forget their own. This barbarous practice existed forty years. Lithuanian literature by no means could accept such abnormal conditions (the Kyrilica system of printing) and so it sought a new abode in Tilsit, (Lithuanian Germany) from whence the literature printed in Lithuanian characters was smuggled into Lithuania.

In 1861 Alexander II abrogated the base feudal system so that this gave the sons of many of the common people an opportunity to seek an education (before 1861 this was prohibited) and who, having receiv-

ed some learning and enlightenment did all in their power to convince the Russian government that the act forbidding the use of Lithuanian characters in printing was unjust and barbarous. However, they did not succeed until 1904 when a great revolution arose in Russia. Fearing that the Lithuanians might join the revolution, Russia, in order to gain their good will, granted them freedom of the press. Here we might mention that previous to this not only was liberty of the press denied them, but also all national movements and declarations, which might include anything that in any way tended to keep alive the national spirit and language, were forbidden and severely punished by banishment to Siberia. As a result of these burdens placed by the Russian government for forty years on the Lithuanian people, they were reduced to a state of bankruptcy and poverty.

All this unhappiness had a most telling and deadly effect upon the Lithuanian people as a nation. Their sturdy sons have left their fatherland and have

settled in Riga and Petrograd. A great many of them have come to America. In Lithuania before the war banks were established, which were successfully contending with the government banks so that great hope is held that all the lost land will be re-purchased from the landlords. During the few years before the war the towns in Lithuania were beginning to assume a Lithuanian aspect and in general all things were reverting to their former Lithuanian nature. A great aid to all this was the freedom of the press, of faith and organizations.

LECTURES

HISTORIC LITHUANIA. THE LITHUANIAN QUESTION.

These talks are designed for churches, lodges, literary and historical societies, and trade and commercial bodies. They are an attempt to make people think to some purpose about the Lithuanian.

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Thomas Shamis,
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ABOUT LITHUANIA AND LITHUANIANS

MAGAZINE FOR BOOSTERS

Edited by **THOMAS SHAMIS**

Five Cents the Copy - Fifty Cents the Year

Published Monthly by **THOMAS SHAMIS**

27 Short Street

Kingston, Pa.



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