

PRO LITHUANIA

A MONTHLY REVIEW

PUBLISHED BY

THE LITHUANIAN INFORMATION BUREAU

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Lithuaniens et Polonais, par A. JAKSZTAS. — Paris 1913.

L'Église polonaise en Lithuanie, par l'Abbé C. PROPOLANIS. — Paris 1914.

La Situation de l'Église catholique en Lithuanie, [par] J. GABRYS. — Paris, 1915.

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The Polish question, by J. GABRYS. — London.

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Kokia autonomija Lietuvui reikalinga? — Chicago, Ill., 1914.

Lietuvos autonomija. — Glasgow 1915.

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23, AVENUE DE LA GARE — LAUSANNE — SWITZERLAND

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION :

2 dollars or 10 schillings.

The Sorrow of Lithuania.

Shattered Hopes of a National Revival.

Lithuania is in the hands of Germans. The four governments of Kovna, Suvalki, Grodna and Vilna have during the summer and autumn been overrun by the enemy. History is being made nowadays so rapidly, in such world-sweeping dimensions, that we have hardly time to dwell on the details of the process. In no stage of advance or retreat does there appear to be any finality. The accumulated results of centuries of struggle, of slow and painful historical development, are in a state of solution. We cannot tell into what forms the political organisation of Europe will ultimately crystallise. We look to the end. We believe in victory. We know that military occupation does not necessarily mean effective conquest. And we live and act because we are sure that the burden will be removed. What is lost shall be regained. What is undone now shall be done better. The terrible suffering of to-day means a chastened, purified, saner Europe to-morrow, next year, perhaps fifty years hence. So we believe, so we must believe, otherwise we should have no foothold in the universe.

The Lithuanian Phase.

But though we strain our eyes anxiously towards the end it is worth while to pause occasionally and consider a little more intently the phases through which our stormshrouded world is struggling through sorrow and glory to her rich attainment. Here is the Lithuanian phase for instance. For most of us the trouble of Lithuania is merely a faint, low moan in the manifold grief of the nations. But for three millions of men and women it is the sorrow above all sorrows, the cloud that darkens all the sky.

Rossieni, Ponievez, Vilkomir, Orani, Lida — these are to most newspaper readers simply the uncouth names of far away battle-fields. For Lithuanians they have a sullen, a bitter, an oppressive significance. They mean the fateful scream of shell, cottages aflame, sweet fields trodden by a hated invader, destitution, death, ruin — a world with the light gone out. And all this at the moment when the Lithuanians were just beginning to realise that they too are a people.

The mental connection between England and Lithuania is slight. Mists hang over the shores of the Baltic, and obscure the lines of ethnographical and geographical demarcation. There is a tendency to confuse Lithuania with Poland, which is partly excusable, because Lithuania and Poland were for centuries as closely united as Scotland and England are. There is also a tendency to confuse Lithuanians with Letts, but there is no more justification for doing this than for confusing Danes with Swedes. Letts and Lithuanians are distinct people. They are akin, their languages are very similar, they are neighbours, but for hundreds of years the ways of their development have lain apart. The Letts are an interesting people, but the Lithuanians are even more interesting. There is a delightful halo of antiquity about these sturdy peasants. Their language is the joy of philologists. It carries one back to the days when the Indo-European languages were young. It has forms as old as, sometimes older than, those of Sanskrit. Numbers of words startle by their striking resemblance to Latin and Greek. The aurochs, whose few remaining representatives still rove in the Bielowiez Forest if German soldiers have not killed them, is called in Lithuanian *tauras*, practically the same word as the Latin name for a bull. A dual number is used in Lithuanian in addition to the singular and plural, and it is curious to read in a Lithuanian translation of Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" that in a Chicago gaol two prisoners use the dual number in conversation. It sounds as though time had stood still in Lithuania if peasants emigrants in America still mould their speech in the fashion of Homer's heroes.

A Strange Folk.

And, indeed; if time has not stood still the Lithuanians themselves have been very nearly motionless from the dawn of history. Their country is near that original home of the Aryans, from which Greeks and Romans and Celts and Germans and Indians

and Persians and Slavs gradually spread to the north and the south and the east and the west. And clinging to their native soil they have cherished the ancient customs, the old thoughts of the race. They are devout Catholics now, but their Christianity has a picturesque background of Pagan beliefs, of romantic folklore which reveals glimpses of a reverent cult of the spirits of the dead, of groves consecrated to the gods of nature, of sacred fires kept perpetually burning by vestal virgins. There is a mystery about them, a shadow as of age-old memories. Among neighbouring peoples they have a reputation for wizardry, and the work of their modern artists, the sculptor Begas and the painter Churlianiš, is steeped in an atmosphere of spells and weird charms.

A strange folk are the Lithuanians, and strange and varied has been their history. Chaucer, in the *Canterbury Tales*, wove one strand of their history into English literature. His knight fought in "Lettowe and in Pruce." That means, unfortunately, that he fought as a mercenary in the Teutonic Order against the Lithuanians. At the time when the Teutonic Order was establishing itself in the Eastern marches, a Lithuanian State ruled by pagan princes was rising to power. The two Powers were deadly enemies. There were fierce and unceasing raids and counter-raids along the Vilia and the Niemen, in all that country where during the last two months the successors of the Teutonic Order have been spreading ruin and death. But when the Lithuanian Prince Jagello married Queen Jadwiga, and so united Lithuania and Poland, he led Lithuanians and Slavs in one brilliant campaign against the hated Order, and broke its power at Tannenberg. But the Order was not crushed. It wiped out the Prussians, kinsmen of the Lithuanians, and on their blood founded that Germanised Prussia that lurked and watched and waited and grew, while Lithuania became merged in the Polish State¹, the Lithuanian nobility became Polonised,

¹ It is a mistake to pretend that Lithuania became merged in the Polish state. Both countries had the same kings since the marriage of Jagello, Grand Duke of Lithuania with Edwige, Queen of Poland. Lithuania, which then possessed territory three times the extent of that held by Poland, concluded no more by this marriage than a dynastic union, a bond of the most precarious kind. But the Poles went so far as to exact a hegemony and the preponderating power in Lithuania, although it has been stipulated in the different acts of union which followed, that the Lithuano-Polish state was a dual state (comparable actually to Austria Hungary), Lithuania keeping her own autonomy. Poland having proved that she was not a sincere ally, the Lithuanians made several attempts to break away from her to save their own country and to restore the national Government of Lithuania as it had existed before the union.

and Poland, cumbrous and unwieldy, fell a prey to inner feuds, and, struggling gallantly and brilliantly to assert her glory, passed slowly into the decline that ended in the tragedy of the partition — that lurid triumph of the myopic astuteness of Prussia.

Nearly the whole of Lithuania came under Russian rule. The sorely stricken Poles long clung to the idea that Lithuania was theirs. In the early part of the last century, Vilna University was the chief seat of Polish culture. The poet Mickiewicz, born at Novogrodek, around which the Germans are now fighting, was educated at Vilna, and some of his noblest lines are devoted to the praise of Lithuania. In Polish literature, Mickiewicz gave to Lithuania the place which in English letters Scott and Burns have given to Scotland. But towards the end of the century the Lithuanian peasants woke to a sharp sense of their national distinctiveness. A Lithuanian national movement arose, stimulated by persecution, and fostered by emigrants in Prussia and America. Since the proclamation of the liberties and the partial concession of language rights in 1905 this movement has rapidly grown, schools have been opened, a new Lithuanian literature is coming into being.

A Nation Without a Home.

But the Lithuanians are homeless now. Their dawning hopes of a national revival are dashed, though not extinguished, by the war. All the loving care that went to the building of schools, the production of plays, the painting of pictures, and the making of beautiful books, is now suddenly diverted to the feeling of little children, who cry for bread. The struggle of peasants to build up through the medium of their ancient language a bright, rich, modern world of their own is overwhelmed in the sharp pangs of a struggle for mere existence. Of the three millions Lithuanians in Russia, 700,000 are now in flight from the Germans. Homeless and nearly all penniless, they are wandering eastward, trusting to the mercy of God and man. There are 30,000 Lithuanian refugees in Petrograd alone. Children are advertising for lost parents, parents for lost children. The resources of charity are heavily taxed. Representative Lithuanians — Deputies, writers, artists and teachers — are organising relief committees, opening refuges and feeding stations, finding work for able hands and shelter for the feeble and aged. The Government gives money, private generosity does its share, but even so, the need of the distraught

wanderers cries aloud. And when all the refugees are provided for, there remains the harassing anxiety for those who are left behind in the hands of an enemy who, neither in Belgium nor Poland, has shown himself merciful. Perhaps the American Lithuanians can help here, perhaps, — but it is a big, big problem. The future of the Lithuanians is bound up with the far hope of the war. Their present is unutterably sad. The Lithuanian name for a German is a word that means devil. The land of the Lithuanians is haunted by evil spirits. They are dreaming of a terrible exorcism. But in the meantime they must live ¹.

HAROLD WILLIAMS.

Life of Fugitives in Russia ².

The greatest phenomenon of this autumn in Russia is the great movement eastward of the population of Western Russia — Lithuanians, Jews, Ukrainians, Poles. Some millions have fled at the approach of the Germans, and all roads north, south and east are crowded day in day out with the everlasting procession of old men, women and children, with their carts and their horses and their cattle.

All Western Russia is on the road, and the distinctive dresses of a dozen provinces may be noted, the different style of the sheepskin and its embroidered sleeves, of the ornamented cottons of the women, of the way of doing the hair. The rich, the townsfolk, have long since gone by rail and have got into the more comfortable places in Central and Eastern Russia. They were thick at the great termini of Moscow, and Kiev and Petrograd last August, and have been distributed. But the poor are on the road and afford an historic, though pathetic and even harrowing spectacle. Ahead come the stronger, the better fed and the less poor, and behind them drags the long crowd less and less hale, the broken, the weary, the desolate. Along the great highways are established relief stations — *pitatelny punkti* — where free food is given out — bread, hot tea, pork-fat, salt, where medical aid is afforded, police orders as to direction

¹ Published in the « Daily Chronicle », London 26. XI. 1915.

² Land and Water. November 27, 1915. — London.

received, shelter given to a few. The police direct the stream to this road, or that road, and give to each family a paper with a written allocation. There is endless difficulty over providing food, over attending to dysentery and typhoid cases. Fortunately there is neither typhus nor cholera, and the autumn weather is unusually warm and dry. But there is appalling distress. Just before leaving Petrograd I heard Purishkeyevitch give his impressions of the road. He had travelled in his relief car past leagues of carts, listened to the cries of lost and frightened children in the forests and given the help he could, emptied all his provisions and medicines as he went. His story brought tears to the eyes. Another Russian who has been along the roads describes the streets of Roslavl, the first great Russian town reached by the Poles and Ukrainians coming out of the broken and ruined West.

« Along the main street of Roslavl, from earliest morning till the darkness of night, without interruption, without ceasing, go two processions, one one way, the other the other.

» On one side of the road come an endless series of grey carts, one after another endlessly — and pass away towards that stretch of the road where yesterday we saw innumerable camp bonfires.

» On the other side, coming from that place, come refugees on horseback, some astride, some side-saddle on little worn-out-horses. They go to the town market.

» Betwixt the two processions is the long empty alley of the street.

» On neither side is a word spoken.

» It is as if funeral processions going in opposite directions were meeting one another. They do not look at one another's faces ; it is as if they passed without remarking.

» Are these who go to the town going to seek food ? To enquire what further orders have been given as to their point of destination ? No, no, they are carrying coffins back to the town. Mostly children's coffins.

» A peasant is carrying a coffin on his shoulders. Silently after him, and without weeping, strides his peasant wife, and clinging to her skirts, chilled, barefooted children also without words and without cries.

» Look, here comes a large coffin from which folds of a bright cotton dress are hanging. It is a girl who has died.

» Four girls are carrying the coffin. They go back to the town that she may be buried in the right way, with the due ritual, in the proper place. »

A Funeral Procession.

« The little procession goes past, simple, beautiful, melancholy, but no one stops to look round or even turns the head. No one meeting the procession crosses himself, nor draws off his cap, nor gives any attention. It is as if the people had ceased to see with their eyes.

And there stretches, stretches along the footways, along the margin of the road, without respite, without interval, without interruption, the two processions, ever coming towards one another and passing.

» Grey carts, carts, carts. Horses, horses, horses, fugitives wandering like shadows, horses, children's coffins, and again horses, horses, horses. The head turns giddy looking at the endless movement. It becomes difficult to breathe because of that which passes before the eyes. »

There are masses of people who have sold their horses, and who now go afoot. And among them you see women who are ikon bearers, women who carry slowly, patiently, unweariedly, large framed pictures of the Virgin and Child. On the roadside graves lie little ikons of the Virgin, Orthodox ikons, Roman Catholic ikons. There are stretches of the road where crosses have grown up like a harvest, the improvised cemeteries for the aged and the lately born.

Families break down, whole caravans of stricken wanderers come to a halt and encamp in the woods and light fires and spend days, weeks, lacking the will to go on. And they eat into the living wood-like worms, cutting down all the trees and the scrub and treading the herblage to dust. Broader grows the black and broader traces of the irbonfires and vaster the circle of gregarious misery and destruction.

Or they flock into the rich country not yet threatened by the enemy and they tread down the crops of other peasants or dig up the potatoes, they dig up whole acres of potatoes, miles of potatoes. And the brother peasant on the spot does not complain. These other unfortunate ones must live somehow.

Sold For a Song.

The cows wander off and get lost, or are sold for a song ; the horses are sold. The women sell their precious gala dresses with gorgeous embroideries. All is lost. The woeful and astonishing wave of

human beings goes on, ever Eastward, patiently, though all is lost ; young girls in the brightness of their first bloom, stiff in their supple limbs, rheumatically old greyboards trudging mechanically, worn-out children lagging behind or carried in the arms.

The same Russian describes the most dreadful scene of all the great plain covered with abandoned carts, the carts left behind by those who have sold their horses. « I thought of the late V. V. Verestschagin », says he. « Only he, with his grey tones could have painted the grey horror of this life, only he could have painted the dreadful picture in all its horror.

» For several dessetinas the whole country was covered with abandoned and broken carts. The iron parts had been unloosed and taken away, wheels lay separately, tilts separately.

» How many were there ?

» Tens of thousands.

» The whole plain was grey with carts, with wheels, with shafts and single-shafts. Having sold their horses for cash the fugitives abandoned their carts here, only taking with them the iron parts they could unfasten.

» Among this grey wilderness of ruin, fugitives were wandering. These were people who preserved their horses and still went in their own carts. They sought any bits of harness or shafts or wheels that could serve them better than their own. From various separate parts they put together whole carts. Newly-branded horses also wandered about ; horses lately bought from the refugees by relief societies or contractors, and you might think they sought by sense of smell or by instinct, the carts to which they had lately been harnessed. They wandered and stumbled — like shadows. They hardly kept their feet — they fell. »

STEPHEN GRAHAM.

The question of the refugees discussed in the Duma.

A speech of M. Januskevitch, a Lithuanian deputy.

A touching speech by M. Januchkevitch, the Lithuanian deputy, was devoted to the question of help for the refugees. The full text is as follows: —



Lithuanian refugees praying on the church place before leaving their village.



Lithuanian families seeking refuge in the forest.



Lithuanian fishermen fleeing from their homes.



Lithuanian refugees reaching the railway station.



Lithuanian Jews having come back in the ruins of their home.



Lithuanian refugees waiting for foods in Moscow.



A Lithuanian peasants' family required to abandoned her home by
„strategic necessities”.

«The preceding speakers have said that neither the Government, nor the Russian people think of what is at present happening in the non Russian countries of the Empire. Why, then, are the doors of the Duma being closed? Is it because the Refugees Bill contains military secrets? The Germans summoned Sven Hedin to Suvalki and he described everything minutely. Why and from whom would you hide everything? Why hide this from Russia, who ought to know and *come the assistance of the frontier countries which are now saving her*, which bear all the weight and defend the indivisibility and honour of Russia with their blood? Entire populations — Lithuanians, Letts and Poles have been driven by force from their countries. None of these nations beg for alms, — neither from you, gentlemen, nor from the Government. These nations, covered with blood, are painfully and cruelly tried, and we once more declare from this tribune that they do not beg for alms. They consider that it is their right; and it is your look out if you will or will not recognise that right. We are merely pointing out our rights; and in the name of these rights we demand that Russia fulfills her duty towards us.

«You cannot create educational values with the rouble. Other conditions are necessary if our wounds are to be healed. You must also satisfy the spiritual needs and desires of nations. Russia's duty is to grant these nations the conditions of existence in which their culture and their spiritual forces can be regenerated. The Government has affirmed the rights of Poland to autonomy. But there are many other nations in Russia (and first and foremost Lithuania) who, owing to their historical past, their present culture, their traditions, their geographical and ethnological situation, have the same right. They cannot heal their present wounds unless you grant full rights to their national organisations, and thus favour their free development. We have bought our right with our sufferings and our blood. In granting our nation material aid, do not imagine that you have done *all* your duty towards us. No, roubles do not suffice to drag us from the abyss into which we have been precipitated through the insufficiency of the military preparations of the Russian Government, which failed to keep the enemy from our frontiers. You ought to say to us to-day: *We come to your assistance, and rest assured that afterwards your rights to national autonomy will be recognised.* »

The fate of the Lithuanian refugees according to the Russian Press.

Russian newspapers, such as *Dien, Outro Rossii*, the *Gazette de la Bourse* and even the reactionary *Novoie Vremia*, devote, daily, long articles to the question of the refugees who were evacuated by force from the districts occupied by the Germans, and very severely condemn the acts of the authorities, who, in their culpable blindness, obliged the population to leave the towns and villages, which the Russian troops then burnt in order to leave nothing to the Germans. The inhabitants would never have left their native soil of their own free will ; they went forth only when expelled by the retreating Russian troops, who drove the people before them.

Now, it is a characteristic fact that when war was being waged on Lithuanian territory this forced evacuation took place everywhere without respect for the interests of the inhabitants, but that now the battle front has been moved to districts where there is a Russian population the military authorities have ceased their practises. Another fact to be noted is that, whereas the Russian population is evacuated gradually to the governments of the centre of the Empire and the nearest districts, the Lithuanians are chiefly sent to Siberia.

The *Birgeviya Viedomosti*, in an article of October 16 entitled « Yellow Labour and the Fugitives », proposed, neither more nor less, than to replace the Chinese coolies who work in the gold mines of the Amour and the *taïgas* of Eastern Siberia by the fugitives, in brief, to colonize these deserted regions with Lithuanians, « for », adds the journal, innocently, « if they were taken there first of all as workmen, perhaps they would remain therefor good, and thus contribute to the solution of the ever-difficult problem of the colonization of Far Eastern Russia ». Thus the refugees, — already so tried, expelled from their native soil, ruined, expatriated, — would by being used to colonize the Siberian *taïgas*, have their cup of bitterness filled to overflowing.

Notwithstanding the appeal and intervention of the Duma, there has been no amelioration in the lot of the refugees. According to a letter from Voronège, published in the *Rousskiya Viedomosti*, dejected human herds, packed in waggons like cattle, or dragging their feet

along muddy roads, travel on and on, wither they are not quite certain, and are often deprived of food for days together. Sickness and epidemics are rife, and there is a woeful lack of sanitary aid. Dead bodies are removed from the fugitive-trains at almost every station ; often they remain there day after day. The wooden buildings used as shelters by the refugees are in a terrible state. Among the evacuated, from 40 to 50% have lost their families and are looking for their children, husbands, sisters, relatives, etc.

A telegram from Kharkof to the *Rousskoie Slovo* states that more than one hundred thousand fugitives have arrived in the Government of Poltava. They are arriving daily in groups of 30 000. Having nothing to eat, they pillage the villages through which they pass, burning the woods and the buildings to warm themselves. In the Government of Kiev, according to the *Rousskiya Viedomosti*, there are as many as 300 000. At Perm, where up to the present there were only civilian prisoners (Austrian and German subjects), there are 100 000.

Thousands of peasants, also, are hiding in the forests to avoid being sent to Siberia or to the eastern Governments of Russia. There are as many as 100 000 of these refugees in the huge forest of Bieloveja, whilst 50 000 others wander in the forests in the neighbourhood of Kobryn. What will become of them ? On what will they feed ? How will they get through the winter ? These are questions it is impossible to answer. Their path is strewn with crosses and bodies that cannot always be buried.

The *Journal de Petrograd* relates the following facts, communicated by a witness who travelled as far as Voronège with a train-load of fugitives. At the station of Homel, there was distributed to fifty people in one of the trucks half a pound of bread per person for the twenty-four hours. At Briansk tickets for bread which had to be fetched from the town were distributed. When those who had undertaken to fetch it returned, they found that the train, with their families and luggage, had left. At Ligow the train remained for three days, during which time three small loaves of bread for every forty eight persons were distributed. Moreover, this was all the wretched people got to eat until the end of their journey, which lasted thirteen days. The carriages in which the refugees travel are not warmed. In some cases they have to travel on open trucks. And everywhere there is a lack of drinking water.

The well-known journalist Ksiounine relates with indignation, in the *Novoie Vremia* of October 16, that the scenes he witnessed in

the refugee-trains border on nightmare. The poor people, travelling in unheated compartments and on open trucks, were shivering with cold ; typhus and cholera were raging ; no sanitary provisions had been made at the stations ; and the trains continued on their journey, carrying their burden of corpses from day to day. Hardly anywhere had refreshments been provided. The scenes were in some cases atrocious.

At one of the stations, relates Ksiounine, there was a Polish peasant woman with a child in her arms, rushing hither and thither and weeping bitterly. No one could understand her. At last, some one arrived to whom she could explain. She had come from the neighbourhood of Brest-Litowsk with her husband and five children. The husband and two of the children had died en route. Her train had remained for two days in the station. Needing a little hot water, she had left her compartment, but on returning she found the train had gone, carrying away her two children. Where could she find them now ? The wretched woman was distracted. Rushing forward, as another train was starting, she threw herself with her baby under the locomotive. Both were cut to bits.

To pile injury upon injury, when these unfortunate people reach a town, the authorities of all ask for their passports ; instead of giving them food, warm clothing, medical assistance, etc., they spend long hours registering them. « Fewer passport formalities, and a little more organisation and order in the work of succouring the fugitives, that is what is wanted », concludes M. Ksiounine.

The Dolorous path of the Refugees.

From the *Ruskoie Slovo*.

We have already given a hasty and touching description of the Lithuanian territory over which the ever-increasing torrent of refugees is pouring towards the interior of Russia. Our correspondent, following the Russian retreat, continues his narrative as follows :

From the station of Brest-Litowsk to the little encampment, we had to follow a dusty highway for a distance of three verstes. A little man came up with his vehicle and asked me : « Can I drive the gentleman to the town ? » I took a seat by his side and the mare took us briskly along. In a short time the little man, who turned out to be a priest, said : « Do you advise me to remain here or to flee ? I should not willingly abandon my church, but perhaps I can make myself useful by accompanying the refugees. » I let him take the

responsability of coming to a decision, which was perhaps facilitated imby the fact that it was impossible to find anything to eat all along the road. Gradually we reached the Beloveja, that well known forest of the Grodna region which has a special feature of its own. Neither glades nor brush-wood are any longer to be seen there ; on both side rise gigantic walls of oaks, birch-trees and pines. The last named dominate, forming with their pretty branches the background of the Beloveja. Finally, I was able to leave the carriage for an autocar. The green walls lost their previous wild character. One could distinguish the wild Puschtscha and the civilised Puschtscha, in which the wild animals are numbered. It is known, for instance, that there exist in the forest : 655 bisons, 10 000 bulls, 3000 wild goats and about 5000 elks, in addition to nearly 500 blackcocks. It may appear astonishing that these figures have been reached, but one must remember that the forest is organised systematically, and that its area, about 100 000 *dessiatines*, is divided into small portions. In this way the animals have as it were, no way out when they reach the boundaries.

The care with which the peasant feed the wild animals in the forest of Bieloveja is particularly remarkable. This is one at certain fixed days and hours, and at certain arranged spots. Thus the animals are numbered. They are so accustomed to the men who feed them that they no longer show any signs of fear.

When I reached the railway I was told that a flock of bisons was quite near. Drawing near, I could see them behind the pines, standing as it were in a reflective mood, as though about to make up their minds as to whether they ought to advance or retire the depths of the forest. One could easily have fired on them. Apart from the inhabitants of the district, this peaceful solitude is visited only by tourists — and certainly in large numbers — curious to see the Bieloveja. Formerly the forest belonged to the Crown and part of it is still called the « royal wood ». Another part bears the name of « Liberty of the Castle ». This is where, in former days, the castle of Stephen Batory stood, and the very ruins of which have now disappeared. Buildings are to be met with in the Puschtscha, in the part reserved for hunting, that of King Augustus II of Saxony, as well as an obelisk dedicated to Alexander II. During recent years the Bieloveja has often been an excursion place for school-children and foreigners who were desirous of observing the life of the wild bisons.

Provided with an order of the Ligue of the Towns, I visited this district when thousands of refugees were seeking shelter in the

Bieloveja with their cattle and kitchen utensils, and when it was necessary to see to their revictualling. This presented great difficulties, especially as regards the transports of bread there, or the cooking of it on the spot. Bread had to be replaced by potatoes from the neighbouring fields of the forest. The refugees had to be content with this meagre fare, for it was impossible to buy anything, and, moreover, they had before them the prospect of a wandering life for months. The dark Puschtscha had taken on quite another aspect. An innumerable population of old people, women and children animated its solitude and in the evening bonfires illuminated the groups, whose encampment presented the most picturesque sight. One constantly heard the question : « Must we continue our journey or return ? The Germans are building their trenches solidly for their own security, and perhaps in Russia the Government will help us ! » However, the refugees cannot remain long in the Bieloveja, because regiments are expected there. Only the wild animals will have no need to flee...

The misery of the Lithuanian Refugees.

When, last summer, the roar of cannon was heard on the peaceful plains of Lithuania, a whole nation was forced to abandon its native soil, driven away by the retreating Russian armies, which transformed the whole country into a desert.

The exodus from Lithuania was much more poignant than that from Belgium. The Lettish nation, quite different in language, religion and customs from those of the Russians, went forth to the interior of Russia, to seek a home in a country which, politically, was foreign and closed to it.

Their carts or long trains deposited them, after an interminable journey, on the platform of distant stations, or in strange faubourgs, where, surrounded by people whom they could not understand, they stood frightened and lost in the midst of an unknown civilisation.

This immense wave of refugees, forced to leave Lithuania, has inundated the whole of Russia, as far as the Ural Mountains and the small towns of Siberia. They are to be counted by millions. Their misery is without limit. Horrible drama after drama is being enacted, without words being able to express the horror of the existence of these poor people who have been dragged from their native soil and « whose lives seem to have no other object, henceforth, than that of adding sorrow after sorrow to the pain which already bears them down ».

* * *

A group of these refugees is before us. A child is coughing horribly in a cart, but the father is occupied above all with his horse, the indispensable companion, the Providence of these unfortunate people.

« He can't go any further, sir, he's lame », said the man, with anguish in his voice, whilst pointing to the animal's bleeding hoof. « Come now, what is to become of us ? »

There were there in the cart : father, mother and child.

« We were four. But one of our little ones died, a fortnight on Thursday. »

« And this one is ill, too », broke in the peasant woman, with a sob in her voice.

« Our strength is going », added the man. « We've been on the road like this for seven weeks. Hon't they take us on the railway ? The little one is ill and the horse can no longer stand. Seven weeks ! »

« Where can we stop ? » continued the man's companion. « Will it take long, sir, to reach our destination ? »

* * *

Here is an old man with the head of a patriarch. He came from the neighbourhood of Vlodava.

« Is the Government of Smolensk still far off » ? he asks.

When told that he has much ground to cover as he has covered already, a smile appears on his lips and his eyes brighten.

« My son », he explains, « lives in the Government of Smolensk ».

And after a deep bow he sets off again in the mud, rejuvenated. He is a happy one, happier than the others. He has an object in view, which makes him impatient and carries him ahead of the caravan « to the Government of Smolensk ». This administrative subdivision, as large as three French Departments, appears to him to be within arm's reach, behind the curtain of mist on the horizon. He knows that, on presenting to the first comer the little square paper which he presses to his breast and on which, in a large clumsy handwriting, are indicated the names of the district and the village where his son is living, he will find a roof under which to die in the midst of his own people. His aged limbs bear him like wings towards that promised land which the others know not, — nomads as they are, wandering along the roads, like bands of Tzigans, without knowing whither Fate is leading them...

* * *

The *Russkoie Slovo* reports the impressions of an officer attached to a sanitary formation. They form a poignant picture.

« One day the ambulance was near to a heavy battery .The guns, skilfully masked, where hidden in a pine-wood, some two hundred feet from the roadway.

» The refugees had established their encampment near by... In the presence of the sufferings of these peaceful, defenceless folk, ruined by the war, crushed by poverty, hunger and the prospect of a terrible morrow, all the terrors of the retreat dwindled into insignificance.

» Lithuanians, Jews, Poles, — all were equally pitiable, distracted; they wandered about aimlessly ; deprived of everything, they crouched near us ; counting solely on the charity of the soldiers, who divided the remains of their rations with them.

» There was a crowd in front a building, over which flew the Red Cross flag ; these were refugees imploring help.

» A little girl of four was there with broken arms. « She fell from the cart under a dray », explained the mother.

» Some were demanding bread ; others were begging to be taken to the nearest railway-station, in order to give them the chance of leaving *for Russia* !...

» Their number was infinite ; many were dying of exhaustion.

» A little girl of fifteen, who had become the head of the family, related her lamentable story. Father was mobilised. We remained at home... But when the Germans drew near to Brest-Litowsk, we were forced to leave. We travelled for more than a week, without either bread or money. Mother fell ill and died. I begged some boards from someone, arranged things and buried her. I remained alone with my little sisters, who are sick. Aid us, aid us — she repeated. Lead us into the good path. Leave us not to perish !

» And thus the tragedies are multiplied, without our being able to find words to express the horror which is reserved for the existence of these poor people who have been dragged from their native soil and whose lives seem to have no other object, henceforth, than that of adding sorrow after sorrow to the pain which already bears them down. »

The war in Lithuania.

The greater part of Lithuanian countries, after being the scene of long and bloody struggles, and being at present occupied by German troops, it has been impossible for us to receive information from our usual Lithuanian correspondents.

The German press alone has published a series of articles on the situation in the occupied countries. It is impossible for us to control its statements. We give them under every reserve, — solely from a documentary point of view; and at the same time we have endeavoured to give a faithful translation, in order to retain the original tone. On the other hand, we give some information concerning our country from a Russian source, where we have found much that is interesting. But our object is not to side either with one or the other. We wish to remain — above all things — Lithuanians.

[Chauliai (Chavli).

It was at the beginning of May and we had reached the town of Chavli, which we ought never to forget, for we found there that which is such a rarity in Russia — excellent beer. The Russians had received powerful re-enforcements, with the object of bringing trouble to our cavalry and the reserve division to which we belong. But German re-enforcements also arrived and drove the Russians to the west, so that the Dubissa, defended by them with the greatest energy, was crossed. The Germans progressed in Lithuania and the German troop, massed to the east of the Niemen, caused the Russians much anxiety, and all the more so because they were supported by strong defences forming an impregnable line from the Baltic to Galicia. The destruction of important railway lines between Riga, Dunaburg and Kovno, which cannot be reconstructed in a few weeks, can only make the resistance of the Russians more difficult.

Our cavalry was called upon for a great effort in this theatre of the war. Distances were great and patrols had to separate them-

selves by many many miles from the main forces. For the first time, the Russians employed here a very large number of Cossacks, who until then had been used merely as police troops. In these countries, covered with forests and marshes, the Cossack, mounted on his well trained, hardy and surefooted horse, is a redoubtable adversary. He never shoots from afar, like the French cavalryman, but allows our horsemen to get only a few yards away and then tries to bring them down one by one.

Behind our very mobile cavalry, there moved, across Lithuania, the waggons of our columns, the munition waggons, the heavy transport carriages for the troops, and finally light columns, which were composed of small peasant vehicles, rapid horses, and also guides — Lithuanian peasants and Jews — who had been requisitioned to meet the circumstances.

Lithuania appeared to the line of our columns almost as « a land flowing with milk and honey ». In the numerous large and well-looked-after estates there were enormous quantities of oats and hay, such as we had found nowhere in Poland. In spite of long marches, our horses renewed their strength to an appreciable extent. Our campaign kitchens had more meat, poultry, milk and vegetables than they were able to use. In the small towns one could purchase whatever was unobtainable in the open country. The lack of horses could be made good by the splendid native thoroughbreds, or sometimes even by the heavy horses reared in the country.

In addition to the task of providing nourishment for the fighting troops, the columns had to find here everything they could, for there was no railway line in the district; they had to assist in transporting large quantities of leather from the tanneries of Chavli to Germany, in order to supply the German army with a raw material of the first importance. If this part of Lithuania is much superior to Poland from an agricultural point of view, it is due to German influences. The large landowners, although Lithuanian in language and nationality, for the most part studied in the Baltic provinces, or in German higher schools, and through them a larger experience was communicated to the Lithuanian peasants, foreigners in language and manners. Here almost every peasant farm is surrounded by an orchard, whereas fruit trees are rare in the government of Poland. The houses are comfortable, the farm buildings and stables are rarely scantily built; whilst great importance is attached to the use of the best seeds and to the rearing of pure-

bred cattle. In the country places, as well as in the towns, it appears that — unlike Poland — a middle class has been formed between the aristocracy and the common people.

Naturally, the development of military operations was fatal to the country. In many places the lack of provisions was felt, and first of all in the case of nourishment for the horses. Many farms and villages were sacrificed through the artillery fire of the two adversaries, and it is with regret that we see here large numbers of poor people, innocent victims of the conflagration into which the world has been thrown, plunged into poverty and wretchedness. It is fortunate that the sacrifices of the German army and the German people have succeeded in keeping the horrors of war outside the country, — horrors which have been experienced only in a few frontier districts. The German soldiers who advance across conquered Lithuania are filled with the same feeling on seeing so much desolation ¹.

Kaunas (Kovna).

A First-class Fortress.

The smiling town of Kovna, dominated by its ancient fortress, stands on the elevated bank of the navigable Niemen, at a spot where the Vilija flows into that river.

Like Warsaw, Riga and other towns of the western theatre of war, Kovna is also divided into two by a river. The old town, with its dirty and tortuous streets, is crowded on the banks of the stream, whilst the new town stretches higher up. The town to-day has more 100 000 inhabitants, almost half of whom are Jews. That is why Kovna possesses no fewer five synagogues and sixteen Jewish schools. There is nothing very remarkable about the few remaining ancient buildings. The Catholic church of Saint-Peter and Saint-Paul, which dates from the fifteenth century, is the largest of the Roman Catholic churches in Lithuania. The Church of Saint-George dates from the same period. The sole Lutheran church, which was built in 1686, dominates with its towers the jumble of houses of the old town. The Town Hall, surmounted by a tower and situated on the market square, possesses much character than the churches. It is a remarkable reminder of Kovna's past, but the building, after being restored

¹ From « Die Hilfe », for April 12, 1915, published in Berlin.

in the seventeenth century, has nevertheless lost something of its beauty.

It is believed that the town of Kovna was founded in the eleventh century. The advantages of its situation gave it extraordinary importance in the history of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, not only historically but also from an economic and military point of view. Kovna was a fortified place. From 1384 to 1398 it became a fortress of the first order. One can still see, in the suburbs of the town, the ruins of the castle of Ritters-Werder (the Knights' Barrier), built by the Germans in 1391. In 1400, when the commander, attacked by the Poles, found himself in a difficult situation, Vitovt, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, hastened to take Kovna by surprise and blow up the fortress. Even in those days Kovna was hotly contended for, and, after the Peace of Thorn, the German Knights, conquered by the Lithuanians at Tannenberg, were again obliged to hand over the town to the conquerors.

This event did not, however, do injury to the town's development. During the centuries that followed, thanks to rich privileges, it attained such importance that, in the seventeenth century, on Henry of Valois taking possession of the Crown of Lithuania, he declared that Kovna was the « jewel of the Republic ».

Kovna reached the height of its renown in 1586 when it was chosen as the principal warehouse for goods to be sent abroad, and was endowed with a customs' house. At this period the receipts of the town reached the annual sum of three million ducats. But terrible trials were in store for the beautiful town on the Niemen. The Muscovites incessantly renewed their attempts to take possession of the important commercial city. Tzar Alexis succeeded in 1655, his soldiers pillaging and burning the town. At the time of the third partition of Lithuania in 1795, Kovna came into the hands of Russia ; but for all that its long series of trials was by no means at an end. A huge fire broke out in 1806 and reduced three quarters of the town to ashes, and so great was the destruction that not more than two hundred houses remained.

On the Niemen, a little up the river, the Russian pursuit of Napoleon's army came to an end in June 1812. A small hill in the neighbourhood of the village of Ponjemon still bears the name of the great French leader. The liberation of Russia from the armies of Napoleon is recalled by an iron pyramid erected on the market place opposite the Town Hall.

After all this strife the town did not become any the less flour-

ishing and thus acquired a certain political importance when, in 1842, at the time of the fresh partition, the old Lithuano-Polish state was chosen as the capital of the new Government of Kovna. It was during this period that the commerce of Kovna reached its greatest development, through the town being the principal centre for the import and export trade with Prussia. Wood, flax, cereals, flour, coal and building stone constituted the most important products. Generally speaking, Kovna is a very active industrial town, with numerous nail and cable factories, steel and iron works, mills for pulverising bone, and breweries.

Seven detached forts stand at the south of the town, three defending the Vilna road and the others the Vilija bridge.

Birchtany, a watering-place in the suburbs of Kovna, on the Niemen, surrounded by woods and known for its salt spring, was much frequented before the war.

The first Conquest of Kovna by the Germans.

It is not the first time that the German flag has floated over Kovna. In the fourteenth century, the Order of Teutonic Knights placed its heel on Lithuania, and the wars between the country and the Germans constitute one of the most celebrated pages in the history of Lithuania. The ancient fortress of Kovna fell in 1362. But already in 1348 a struggle against the hereditary Lithuanian enemy had taken place on the banks of the little river which flows into the Niemen near Kovna. It is related that an army of only 8000 Knights, commanded in person by the great leader William of Kniprode, defied a powerful Lithuanian army numbering as many as 40 000 men. Afterwards, in 1362, a great expedition was sent against Kovna itself, whose situation at the confluence of the Vilija and the Niemen made it the most important strategical place in the whole of Lithuania. As has been shown by Theodore Schiemann, its fortifications not only defended the rich agricultural districts of Vilna, Troki, and Vilkomir, it was at the same time the spot which, on the one hand, best protected Samogitia, Lithuania and Black Russia, whilst on the other the territory of the Order was the most exposed on that side. In 1362 the Grand Master, joined by the Bishop of Riga and the Master of Livonia, led to the assault of the fortress, well provided with siege machines, a numerous army, but one equipped with the very primitive artillery of the beginning of the Middle Ages. The hero of the ancient Pagan Lithuanians (in whom were united, leaving a sympa-

thetic impression, all the good qualities of a race condemned, however, to fall into decadence) was in command. Even the adversary did not refuse to esteem Keistutis, who is praised in the Chronicle of the Grand Master as no other « Pagan » ever was. But, in spite of his heroic resistance and that of his son Woidat (according to one version, Woidat alone organised resistance), the Lithuanians were unable to resist the army of the Order, which was considered at that time to be the finest in the whole of Europe. On April 17, on Easter eve, resistance was at an end ; the leaders and thirty-six survivors of the garrison sought to blow out their brains, but were made prisoners. The Grand Master von Kniprode made a triumphal entry amidst the ruins of the blazing fort.

The forteresses of eastern Europe were then, like most of the buildings in the country, built of wood. The prince, says the Chronicle clearly, « carpentered » a new town, for as the fall of Kovna had become inevitable, Woidat had set fire to every corner of the wooden town, leaving but a bonfire to the conqueror. However, the town did not long remain deserted. Hardly had the Knights of the Order withdrawn, after the complete destruction of the sad ruins of Kovna, than a new town, about three leagues away, on an isle of the Niemen, was built, — a new town which afterwards became the scene of many more combats. It was in vain that Kniprode raised against it an offensive and defensive fortress, to which he gave the pious name of *Gotteswerder*, or God's Dam. The new Kovna grew and survived, to become, once more, after more than five hundred years, a battle-field.

Between Kovna and Vilna.

Zyzmory, August 27.

We advance! — that is the feeling which animates every section of the troops of the German army on the eastern front. This consciousness that the greatest difficulties have been overcome brings a sense of lightness to the soul and impels everyone to put forth the greatest effort. There is a desire to finish before the winter, and, as we know, much still remains to be done. That is why brisk work is going on everywhere ; here, also, we observe that campaign warfare communicates briskness to the troops. The besiegers and conquerors had hardly time to enjoy the charms of Kovna, which to them was but a half-way house in which they spent barely a day or two. All they saw there were closed shops and abandoned dwellings, for already in April and May the Russians began to drive the Jews and the Ger-

mans from the town. Speaking generally, we were unable to buy anything and when the opportunity occurred only at exorbitant prices. For that reason the officers, as well as the soldiers, were not sorry to move further on, for time began to move heavily on our hands at Kovna. One could see how, little by little, a clean sweep had been made of everything. The dead town began to come to life again slowly ; timidly, one after the other, the shops opened, — the bakers, the provision shops, the barbers, and the numerous chemists, who, in Russia, keep not only drugs but cosmetics. But it will be a long time before trade recovers from the brutal trampling under foot on the part of the Russian authorities. Tillman's great screw works, a prosperous establishment owned by a German and employing about 1500 workmen and a thousand special engineers, have been completely destroyed. The Russians were about to pillage the works when our troops entered the town. The machine-tools were on inclined planes between the broken-in windows, ready to be brought into the street, whilst a small railway had been constructed between the works and the railway-station in order to transport the machinery more easily. But everything remained there. During the last few days the railway was cleared away, as it impeded the traffic, but the machines still remain resting on beams. It would be useless to replace them in the burnt out building. A large brewery was also burnt to the ground. In the deep cellars one could still see gigantic barrels filled with a delicious liquid to which the sense of smell of our soldiers had no longer become accustomed. The whole of the stock was removed from the half demolished cellars in pails and distributed to the soldiers, who sometimes rushed wildly on the nectar. Anyway, the Russians, with their deep knowledge in such matters, so arranged things that Kovna will experience the horrors of war for a very long time. The siege has also caused much damage to the public buildings and churches. Almost all have suffered, and particularly the Greek-Catholic Church on the market-place. When I visited it, precious altar cloths, bishops' mitres, silver candelabra, gilded crucifixes and other treasures were lying here and there in indescribable disorder. The synagogue had been pillaged, but was intact. Mass is again being said in the Catholic churches, as well as in the small Protestant Church of Saint Gertrude, where the aged pastor seeks to console his parishioners in their present hard trials.

The attempt to join hands from Kovna with the troops which had marched towards the east encountered unaccustomed difficulties. Roads are exceedingly rare and everywhere hardly usable in rainy

weather. Troops on the march and still more the interminable convoys hardly contribute to the amelioration of the roads. It would, indeed, be almost unbelievable, if we had not the evidence of our eyes, that two great towns like Kovna, which has 100 000 inhabitants, and Vilna, which has 250 000, should be connected merely by a sandy highway. If we would believe the Russian statements that the lack of roads on the frontier of Eastern Prussia is explained by strategic necessities, this argument no longer holds good between Kovna and Vilna. On the contrary, the need for proper means of communication between the two towns is of great importance for the operations of the Russian army. But here they have taken pains to build rather a sandy and hardly usable way than a carriage road. Generally speaking, in these parts the Russian administration has distinguished itself by its defects. In every branch of culture it has, in the same manner, shown neglect ; what I have said regarding the roads equally applies to the schools.

Anyway, one thing cannot be denied, — that Russia has devoted all her strength to preparations for war. In this respect she has truly attained her object, though the work is not without weak places. However, it is quite incorrect to speak of lack of armaments, equipment or provisions for the Russian army. The Russian soldier is still very well clothed and fed. Russian tinned foods, as proved by the provisions found at Kovna, are at least equal to German supplies. The canned tomatoes especially make delicious soup. Russian biscuits are not appreciated by our soldiers, but they are nevertheless very good and aromatic in flavour. Russian tea is of the finest quality. The same may be said of the hospital arrangements. Our doctors are filled with admiration for the Russian instruments. A huge stock was found at Kovna. The hospitals installed at Kovna by the Russians were organised wholly for military purposes. One cannot help asking oneself if France has not exercised great control in the domaine of military preparations, or whether the Russian Government, of its own initiative, did not concentrate all its strength here. One thing, however, is certain, — namely, that French loans have been devoted to armaments, and that Russia herself has made considerable sacrifices with the same object. It is true that this offensive and defensive edifice, the completion of which required many many years of arduous work, is about to fall like a house of cards.

Our autocar follows the columns moving eastwardly, — follows them painfully, and yet we prefer to cross fields rather than keep to the pitiable highway. It leads first of all to the Niemen, which is here

still a superb river, and might be made into an important commercial waterway if it were carefully and thoroughly arranged for navigation. At the present, it is used only in the spring, when the water is high, for floating wood. Towards the south the river makes a bend and has many windings. Fortunately the country produces a fairly good impression.

Evidently the Russians never seriously thought that the German troops would ever be able to reach this district. When Kovna fell we pressed the enemy so closely that they had no time to continue their work of devastation, and for this reason the region beyond Kovna has suffered relatively little. The Russians endeavoured to carry off the harvest of cereals, but there is still an abundance of corn, and cattle are not lacking. The inhabitants hid somewhere, but they are beginning to return. It appears that agriculture here attains a much higher degree of perfection than in Poland. The harvested fields are already partly ploughed. The quality of the soil varies, but, on the average, is very fertile. Generally speaking, the countryside, with its wooded hills and well-watered valleys, reminds one of Courland. The appearance of the houses, surrounded by orchards, is very agreeable. There is a superabundance of yellow plums. Vegetables are also much cultivated.

As everywhere, I notice that *the Russification of this country is only superficial*. The Russian dictionary is but a poor aid, for one notices the blank look of the native. Although we have already penetrated into the Russian Empire, Russia properly so called is still far away. Up to the present at least, I have not come across any district where the Russian language is that of ordinary conversation. I have also come to the conclusion that *the number of Lithuanians and Letts inhabiting the Russian Empire is very much higher than is indicated by the official Russian statistics*. And the vast band of territory already conquered, surrounded by corn fields, has nothing in common with the land inhabited by the true Russians. At the present moment, the majority of the true Russians who inhabited the country are naturally in flight, but, generally speaking, I am assured that the Russian does not come here unless obliged, as an official or a trader. *The question of the infiltration of the Russian spirit and language into the Baltic Provinces and Lithuania need not be considered for a moment*. One must not forget that the Government of Kovna not only possesses an absolutely Lithuanian character, but that, in the first place, Vilna, which will soon be reached by our troops, is considered as the very capital of ancient Lithuania.

Lithuania is itself *very different from Poland* ; its capable population is much nearer to the Germans than to the Poles. One can hardly oblige them to love us, but the Russians, and particularly the Cossacks, are the object of their aversion. Here, at Zyzmory, half way between Kovna and Vilna, people are in a position to relate how the Germans fell unexpectedly on the backs of the Russians. Last Sunday, the Cossacks were still taking their ease, pillaging as much as they could, and especially wringing the necks of fowls. Suddenly there was a cry of : « Here are the Germans ! » The Cossacks fled as best they could, and by way of the gardens at the back of the houses reached the fields, abandoning their horses and baggage waggons. In fact, half an hour later, the first German soldiers entered the village and found a goodly booty. Since then, the German advance guard has got far in advance ; in the east, sometimes, it has come into contact with the Russian rear guard, but without any very serious shocks occurring. It is hardly to be expected that the Russians can stop the German offensive in this country, which lends itself so little to defence.

II

Kovna, September 1.

Owing to a series of unforeseen circumstances, I was forced to stop longer than I wished in this hidden corner of the world — the little Lithuanian town of Zyzmory. Meanwhile, the German troops had already reached territory in the east and south. Violent fighting took place along the whole front. During the day and all through the night you could hear, in the distance, the roar of cannon. The Russians had fortified themselves in the neighbourhood of the chain of lakes to the west of Vilna, and by an energetic resistance and vigorous offensive sought to preserve proud Vilna from the fate of Kovno. The German will to conquer this last resistance of the Russian military power is all the stronger. Thus, from day to day, fresh troops of all sorts, munition transports, and convoys cross the country towards the west. We see the troops marching forward gaily and indefatigably; we wish them good luck and success, and we regret our inability to accompany them. But these days of involuntary leisure were not wasted. It gave one the opportunity of observing the effect produced on the population by the German penetration and at the same time daily life behind the front.

Zyzmory, unlike localities situated more to the east which have been reduced to ruins and ashes by the Russians, was almost com-

pletely spared by them, perhaps because the Germans followed too closely on their heels. Nevertheless, the houses had been sacked from garret to cellar. The majority of these had been abandoned by their inhabitants. The doors were locked and nothing could be purchased. Little by little the picture was modified. One after the other, families came out of the hiding places into which they had crept and returned to their homes.

Overburdened with beds and kitchen utensils of all sorts, the vehicles, drawn by small horses, advanced, swaying and jolting. Old women and little children sat in state on the piles of old furniture, whilst the other members of the family walked by the side, driving a cow or a sheep before them. Since the Germans had entered they felt in safety. Thus, doors began to open, one after the other, and in the evening the inhabitants, Lithuanians and Jews, were sitting in front of their houses, chatting and laughing. The soldiers, clad in grey, quickly succeeded in gaining their confidence. For several days we had to do without bread. This evening I saw a man whose clothes were covered with flour. « Are you a baker ? And can I have some bread ? » I asked. « Yes », he replied. He had just taken the bread out of the oven. Accompanying him, I bought a pound of bread for a penny. It was still warm, and though somewhat black was very good. He could not yet make white bread, owing to the Russians having stolen all his white flour. I entered into conversation with this man and asked him whence came that « Yes », for he had answered in English. Not without pride, he related that he had been to America. Up to now, the United States was the dream of all those who felt ill at ease under Russian despotism. It is no rare thing to find that the finest house in a district belongs to an « American ». Continuing to ask him if the inhabitants would persist in emigrating, the baker replied that this would no longer be necessary under a new régime.

One can easily understand the shortage of bread, for numerous troops are in cantonment here, whilst many others have already passed through the place. In war time, things are not always in accordance with the prescriptions for the feeding of the army. Provisions are sometimes late in arriving. In Germany, you hear people speaking of beer at the front, and they think that every soldier has his daily pint. Beautiful dreams to which reality gives the lie ! During the six days that I have been at Zyzmory I have not seen a single bottle of beer, and further in advance the state of affairs will certainly not be any the better. To find a little bread, we had to walk to a fairly

distant locality, where, by chance, a provisioning office had been opened for a few hours. It is not always like this, but the same thing may happen again. Moreover, the soldiers have to fight for days together without cessation. They support all this with astonishing good humour.

Behind the front we have also an opportunity of seeing the evacuation of the wounded to the rear. This is perhaps the most poignant side of the war. I witness their arrival daily. They are transported in the small carts of the peasants. With pallid faces, they lay stretched on the straw, patiently supporting their pains, but with an expression of infinite suffering in their eyes. The quicker they are taken to the base, the less long they have to wait for medical attention, and sometimes this is still much too long for these unfortunate men.

At last we had to make up our minds to return to Kovna. It was with much difficulty that, with the aid of a small vehicle, we reached a station on the line from Kovna to Vilna. We hoped to be able to go a little further by rail. A sort of communication by railway does, indeed, exist, but the Russians have taken away all the locomotives. A few dozen cattle trucks were all they left, and these are pulled along by horses. They bring some materials from Kovna and on the return journey are utilised for the wounded. There was nothing for it but to resign ourselves to obtaining a small place in a waggon filled with seriously wounded soldiers. There were twenty-one men, not one of whom was capable of moving an inch. The majority were wounded in the legs ; others had serious wounds in the lungs or stomach. A Hessian soldier was stretched side by side with a Silesian, a Saxon side by side with a Westphalian. It was a picture of the blackest misery. Once you have seen this and lived through it, you know what war is and what a spectacle it presents.

« Why have I merited this ? » said a man with a shattered thigh.

« It is certainly not your fault », I replied, by way of consolations ; « others have this on their conscience ».

He feared that his leg would be lost, so added, in a melancholy voice :

« I have been able to be of but little use to my country ; I have been on campaign only since July 20 ».

Another, stretched at my side, had been struck by a bullet in the chest ; he was groaning and moaning, unable either to sit up or lie down, had a desire to cough and could not. Further away, a third once more took from his pocket the photograph of a woman with

three little children. After gazing at it long and intently, he replaced it, sighing deeply. A fourth, as pale as death, lay near with his leg swathed in bandages. He explained that his lamentable condition was the result of his long journey : first of all four, then ten, then twelve hours in a vehicle. At every jolt he experienced horrible suffering. All were calling out for the hospital where they hoped at last to find rest and relief from their pain. But the base was still far off, the train moved slowly and there were stoppages at every moment. During the first few hours, the wounded were still a little excited through the change of situation. Before the departure we were able to obtain a few cigars to distribute among them. All clamoured for them and tried to smoke. Tobacco is above all excellent as a consoler and calmate. This one and that one were speaking of their experiences on the various battle-fields. It was not wise to speak of the Russians, whose fire had caused horrible wounds in the course of recent fights. One man who had fought in France remarked on the difference between the struggle with the Russians and that with the French. Generally speaking, Russia is depicted as a weaker adversary ; though it is pointed out that there are great distinctions to be made among the different Russian troops. The bravery and excellent marksmanship of the Siberians are especially praised. Gradually the conversation dies away. Fatigue overcomes the sick men ; they fall into a state of agitated somnolence. One of them, fever-stricken, imagines himself still in the midst of the battle ; without cessation, he encourages his comrades, excites them and warns them afresh. But sleep is not of long duration. The interminable hours pass. At ten in the morning the wounded receive their breakfast. Then the evening comes again. Intense darkness reigns in the waggon. We light a small torch whose feeble rays render the sad scene still sadder. At last, at ten at night, we reach Kovna railway-station. We jump out and once more breathe the pure air. The time has at last come when the poor wounded can be transported to the hospital. An ambulance is ready in waiting, but can only take a few at a time, and so it is still a long time before all the sufferers can be taken away to the hospital¹.

¹ From the *Berliner Tageblatt* for September 3 and 8, 1915.

Behind the Kovna front.

THE REMAINS OF RUSSIAN DEFENSIVE ART. — OBSERVATION STATIONS.

— HOW THE TAKING OF KOVNA WAS PREPARED. — RETURN
OF THE PEASANTS TO THEIR WORK.

Kovna, September 14.

A journey to the German frontier recently gave me the opportunity to see once more the vast region to the west of Kovna which had to be conquered foot by foot during the first half of August. My route led me amidst the grandiose fortifications which three days before the fall of the fortress still seemed to the Russian officers who had been made prisoners to be impregnable. Having crossed the enceinte of the town, the forts and the advanced fortified works, one could still see everywhere the underground shelters against bombs, the places where the batteries had been cleverly installed, and above all the endless lines of trenches. Without a doubt, the Russians are masters of the art of utilising the ground in the careful construction of defensive works of all sorts. Everything which could be employed for the weakening of the enemy's attack : a sevenfold row of barbed wire, mined areas and other extraordinary means, were to be found before Kovna. And the Russians are no less skilful in observing the movements of the enemy and in the art of hiding themselves from the sight of the German aviators. On all sides are still strewn the branches of trees with which the position of the guns and ammunition waggons were masked. Their leaves are now dry, but as long as they remained green they gave the illusion of bushes, which, in reality, were intended to hide sinister cannon from the eyes of our airmen. Indeed, it happened that the position of many a Russian battery was not discovered until the time when the position was taken by assault.

The adaptation of natural means was also to be admired in the case of the Russian observation stations. In one place, in the midst of the plain, a giant oak arose. At first you did not notice anything. But on looking closer you could see that, in the rear, a ladder led to the branches, and then you also perceived that a second ladder was fastened to the first, and so on up to an observation post at the summit of the tree. Such outlooks are found not

only in the interior of the fortresses, but also far outside. Truly the Russian defensive, here as well as at other parts of the front, reveals much zeal and skill in judging direction. Admiration for the heroism of the German troops who had to overcome and destroy all these obstacles increases all the more.

The region which, but a short time ago, was the scene of violent fighting is now calm and silent. It leaves almost a peaceful impression. The bodies of the Russian soldiers who fell have long since been respectfully buried. The crosses on the tombs scattered throughout the country alone recall the bloody duel. The dead horses, which give so sad an appearance to a battle-field, have also been removed. Kindly Nature will soon cover up human weakness with greensward. The inhabitants themselves have, in part, returned. Frequently their cottages have been burnt, their gardens devastated, their implements carried away, their cattle stolen, but nevertheless these sons of the soil remain devotedly attached to Mother Earth. Here and there they can already be seen at work, and although indigent are setting in order, within their bare walls, what remains of their furniture, are busy replacing windows and doors, in order to have a little protection against the wind and bad weather.

Occasionally, in places where nothing remains, small wooden shelters, in which families may again make their home, are being constructed. One cannot be too grateful to the German administration for assisting — as far as was compatible with military exigencies — the inhabitants of this region. The German army wages warfare only on the Russian army; as far as lays in its power, it looks after the interests of peaceful inhabitants. This solicitude has already borne fruit behind the Kovna front. The countryside already shows signs of human work. In the fields, in certain places, you can still see over-ripe corn, but the greater part has been cut out and stored. Once more the peasants possess one or two horses. Everywhere they are at work. Some of the fields are already ploughed and prepared for next year's harvest. On the pastureland a few cows are being tended by children. The highways are again open to traffic. Bare-footed women and girls pass on their way carrying large baskets, whilst heavily loaded harvest-carts precede them. It is a timid beginning, but a return to a peaceful life is already noticeable, and this is all the more evident the nearer one gets to the German frontier. At Mariampol and Vilkovisky, there is already a very animated traffic; at Wirballen especially, there is perhaps greater activity than before the war.

Here the inhabitants are already profiting by the passage of those German soldiers who have money in their pockets, and who do not bargain when they wish to buy something. We are particularly thankful that we have fresh eggs and butter. After eating nothing for six weeks but black bread and tinned foods, and not even always that, you begin to appreciate country delicacies.

Numerous recollections return to me whilst crossing this conquered region. Here, near Veivery, quite close to the road, was a place where the prisoners were gathered together. The immense and badly enclosed ground was sometimes covered with such a quantity of Russians that they could hardly move. They have long since been transported to the interior of Germany and are now rendering great service as road-makers, transport workers and harvesters. On the spot where formerly was so much animation a cow now grazes. There, on the other side, in the forest, very large mortars, whose gigantic projectiles caused such terror to the Russian people, were placed in position. Here, on the roadway, automobile batteries were drawn up. From that tower over there I followed the attack on Godlevo. All this is now a thing of the past. Perhaps the most interesting point about this struggle in the east is that the theatre of war is constantly changing and that the part of the enemy's territory occupied by German troops is continually being enlarged. A transformation from siege to campaign warfare characterises the eastern situation.

At the commencement of the summer only a relatively small portion of the adversary's territory, in the north-east, was in the power of the German troops. Our troops advanced more and more from the direction of Libau. But the adversary still held Chavli, he still held firm on the Jesia, near Kalvaria, to the east of Suvalki and Augustovo, and was master of Ossowiec. That was but for a day. Now the German front has moved further into the interior of Russia, beyond Mitau and Friedrichstadt, and beyond the Niemen. Advancing whither it suited us, we can now travel for hundreds of kilometres across a formerly Russian country before we reach the German frontier. But however rapid may be the advance, the road is never free of German troops. At every spot as far as the frontier there is at least a military control and the principal places are under the authority of commanders. One can easily understand that the line of communication with the Fatherland must not be broken for a moment; the longer it is, the more energetically one is able to act. And without cessation fresh



Gerdaui, a Lithuanian town in East Prussia razed to the ground by the Russians.



German soldiers „at home” in a Lithuanian cottage. (Trobishkiai, Mariampol, Suv g.)



A Lithuanian abandoned cottage used by the Germans as a Hospital.



A scene Outside a Lithuanian cottage which is used by the Russians as a Hospital.

divisions proceed to the east ; without cessation fresh guns and long ammunition columns are brought up. You can see campaign kitchens being transported towards the forest, in addition to pontoons for the construction of bridges, and stores of provisions for the men and horses. The army leaders of former days depended essentially on the region they occupied : war fed on war. Nowadays booty constitutes comparatively but a small part of the ever increasing necessities for the maintenance of the well-being of an army, The affluence of the country must not cease flowing for a single moment if the springs are to continue to give forth their maximum output. The capacity of the German people in recruiting troops, in seeing to the various means of fighting and the feeding and clothing of an army of several millions is all the more astonishing.

In this respect the campaign postal department must not be forgotten. It is the work of man, and therefore not exempt from weakness and defects. He who has been and is still on campaign has sometimes been annoyed with it. But, on the other hand, it would be unjust to forget the enormous services it has rendered. You have only to have seen the campaign post of a single division filling the whole day a large room to the very ceiling with innumerable heavy mail bags, — you have only to have studied how the small packets containing books are sorted, until the large leather bags for each division are filled to the point of bursting, to be able to understand that a few errors may have occurred. One can also understand how it is that letters or parcels do not always arrive as punctually as the sender and receiver would wish. Too often the roads are impracticable and sometimes postal relations with the Fatherland are completely interrupted owing to the displacement of troops. If we take all this into consideration, if we take into account all the inevitable difficulties, we cannot refuse to recognise that the employés of the military postal department do their duty in every respect, sometimes even to the point of exhaustion. Anyway, the heavy and overloaded autocars of the military post are to be seen coming and going along the roads throughout the day and night. They constitute an indispensable part of modern warfare, and whatever may be the strength it calls forth, one cannot desire it to do less. Letters and presents are to everyone who is on campaign, whoever he may be, signs of friendship from home, and fairly often they are the only ray of sunshine on dark days. Thus it is now on the roads leading to the front, in one direction and in another, in rainy or sunshiny weather, in the cold and during the night. Once

more we acquire the reassuring conviction that for more than another year of war the reservoir of men who are capable of bearing arms in Germany is full to overflowing.

The main road leading from Eydtkuhnen to Kovna is no longer so animated as it was before the conquest of Kovna. A dense cloud of yellow dust then rose almost incessantly above it. The passage of troops and various columns went on for weeks at a time. For one must not imagine, as a superficial critic who remained at home might do, that the siege of an attack on Kovna were improvised. In reality, all the preparations were made with the greatest care and prudence. As an example, I will mention only one fact, — that on July 19 a division began to clear the forest of Kovna in order to procure the necessary positions for the big German guns which were to bombard the fortress. On July 25 we set about the preparation of a special road in order to bring these big guns into position. The big mortars were immediately put in place, whilst the infantry prepared for the assault. The transport of the other pieces of heavy artillery had already been undertaken for a long time back, before the leaders of the troops which were to take part in the attack knew that so serious an action was to be directed against Kovna. When I went still further south, infantry troops informed me that they were to be immediately transported towards the north, — with what object the officers could not say. Suddenly, troops and siege material which up to then had been utilised elsewhere appeared. Long before one had even a thought of crossing the Niemen convoys of pontoons had been assembled on the Kovna road. This minute preparation enabled us to profit by every success immediately. The secret of victory was preparation at the right moment. When in front of Kovna it was not necessary to retire a step, everything was but a great enchainment of proper measures and also a series of events which all those who contributed to prepare them will understand. In this instance it was above all a question of a strategic action of astonishing precision. Men do not generally trouble their heads over the subtleties of strategy. They know that nothing more will be expected of them than that each should fill the place assigned to him. And as they are convinced they are under good leadership, they do their best. They have the valiant conscience which belongs to victory, and they have not lost their good humour either. Incidents on the road offered amusing proofs of this. Thus a scarecrow took the form of a country woman, with a big bag, in the form of a market

basket, on one arm, whilst she points with her other towards the west. "To Kovna!" was to be read in large letters on the lady's bag. The German troops have found the way. A big cannon is still there: a long tree trunk on the axle of a carriage with two wheels. The menacing instrument bears the redoutable inscription: «Against Kovna!» Evidently it carries very far, for Kovna is no less than forty kilometres away. To that may be added other ironical inscriptions which leave nothing to be desired from the point of view of strategic audacity. That Petersburg and Moscow are chosen as goals is only natural; many other "war goals" are much further away.

At last the frontier is reached and once more we walk on German-soil. The scene suddenly changes. Whatever our administration may have been able to do on the other side to ameliorate the lot of the inhabitants, the faults of the wretched Russian administration cannot be repaired in a moment. But notwithstanding the ravages caused by the Russians on German soil, making almost a desert, they did not succeed in driving the vital force from it. The first frontier town, Eydtkuhnen, has been very badly damaged by cannon and burnt. But now business men and well-dressed ladies are already to be seen there. Roses and asters are flowering in the little gardens in front of the houses. These have been made habitable. Behind their shining windows clean curtains are hanging. And as to the pretty little shops, you must go to Samogitia, Courland and Lithuania to find anything equal to those things to which the German eye is accustomed. The further you penetrate into the interior of Eastern Prussia the more the change is visible. The population has regained courage and confidence, it is working as though it wanted to earn next year what it lost through the disagreeable Russian occupation. The harvest has been gathered in almost everywhere; often the winter wheat is already sown. Horses and cows are no longer scarce. Large flocks of sheep browse in the stubble. Naturally, everything is far from being in the state it was before the war; conditions will improve. But all this will be set right; you come away with that consoling certainty. In the most important places above all, one has the impression that a popular fête is being celebrated, so animated are the streets and so well dressed are the people. One can understand that the Russians, when they entered the still inviolate frontier towns for the first time, opened their mouths and eyes. At that time a Russian officer, full of admiration, said to a N. C. O.

of the sanitary corps, who had been surprised by the Russians at Goldap: "Fine place, Goldap! I shall come and settle down here after the war." When you come to know Russian countries, you understand this very modest desire for our manner of arranging things ¹.

Dr PAUL MICHAELIS.

Grodna.

The fortress of Grodna, on which attention has been concentrated, relative to operations on the eastern front, is one of the oldest towns of Lithuania. It was already mentioned in the twelfth century, in the chronicles of this country. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Grodna was several times the object of the crusades of the Teutonic Knights.

In the year 1387, at the town's western exit, there was built the castle of Vytautas, which afterwards became celebrated. Very often the Kings of Poland held there a brilliant court. It was decided in 1673 that each third Diet should be held at Grodna.

It was in this town that John Sobieski signed the treaty of Andrassow, which put an end to the long war between the Poles and the Muscovites. During the war of the North, the town held out for several years against the armies of King Charles XII and was not conquered by the Swedes until 1708. It was also at Grodna that the last act in Polish history took place. The last Polish Diet was forced « by its silence » to accept the second partition treaty (July 22, 1793). On September 25, 1795, King Stanislas Augustus signed his abdication there. Until 1797 he inhabited the castle of Grodna; after that he moved to Petrograd and continued his life of pleasure.

Grodna is situated on the right bank of the Niemen, down stream and near the bend which the river makes when it takes a northern direction. The two slopes of the valley are thirty yards high and descend very abruptly towards the river. The streets descend towards the stream between two huge steep embankments. There is something very picturesque about the position of the town, with its large old churches, its castle, which latterly was used as barracks, and the valley of the Niemen, the bed of which is very deep.

Grodna was much damaged in 1885 by a huge fire.

¹From the "Berliner Tageblatt" for September 19.

In Podlachia.

Podlachia is the ancient name of the country which lies on the eastern bank of the Bug as far as the Narew in the north. Bielos-tock, in the north, and Brest-Litowsk, in the south, may be considered the limits and form, at the angles, the extreme points of this country, which, under present circumstances, will inevitably become the scene of noteworthy military events. For centuries this country has always been regarded as part of Lithuania. Immense plains covered with reeds and brush-wood stretch on the banks of the Bug and the Narew, but vast forests constitute the veritable character of the country. These Lithuanian forests are partly marshy or are on the borders of marshes, and render the country difficult as regards traffic. The modern period, however, is bringing changes. In certain parts of the Government of Grodna, formed by Podlachia, immense marshes have been rendered suitable for agriculture and many of the old forests have been cut down. In districts where, formerly, there were only solitary hamlets you now find villages surrounded by fields and grass-land, whilst industrial towns are developing rapidly.

The Forest and the Bisons of Bieloveja.

However, a former domain of the prehistoric Lithuanian forests is still in existence in Podlachia: the vast Forest of Bieloveja, which occupies the northern part of the large tongue of Bieloveja and covers an area of about 2,200 kilometres. Biela Wescha means « the White Tower » and it is believed that this denomination comes from a castle of the same name which stood on one of the banks of the Bug in the sixteenth century. The forest of Biela Wescha consists to-day of nearly all the country between the Bug to the north of Brest-Litowsk and the region where the Narew, in the dark depths of the forest, begins its course. To the south and south-west the forest is transformed into a landscape which reminds one of French territory, where forests of stunted pines alternate with fields of rye and immense tracts of heather, in which bees seek for honey. The further north you advance, the deeper the forest becomes, and thus it stretches almost as far as the Niemen.

The celebrated forest of Bieloveja presents, indeed, one of the

rarest and most striking aspects of Nature in the whole of Europe. It is a jewel of a special kind, a veritable virgin forest of the north, fifty kilometres long and forty kilometres broad. It is isolated; surrounded by fields, villages and wastes, its situation is comparable to that of an island. In the interior of the forest only a few human habitations are to be found, and in these, not agriculturists but woodmen and hunters live. The forest consists for the most part of pines, but oaks, lime-trees birches and willows are also found there. The trees attain an unbelievable age, surprising height and considerable vigour. The forest presents the same appearance as centuries, perhaps thousands of years ago. This wild spot, which has preserved its characteristics from the most remote times, still shelters the largest mammal of the European continent, the buffalo, or powerful bison, which, with the exception of here and the Caucasus, is extinct. In the forest of Biłowieża the bisons are protected by very severe laws, without which these animals would certainly have ceased to exist as a European species. The kings and grand dukes of Poland and Lithuania attached great importance to the preservation of the bison, and even now it is still protected by severe orders issued by the Tsar. However, the rumour of war has now reached this refuge of wild nature, and the fate of the bisons of Biłowieża is still unknown. One wonders whether they have been led into captivity to Minsk by the Russians, or whether these kings of the virgin forest have come within range of the cannon, whose deep roar awakens the echoes in the depths of their wild retreat.

He who would make a path through this wild country would have to overcome great obstacles. Under his feet he would find the debris of giant trees which, having fallen and rotted, would crumble under his feet as soon as he attempted to walk on them. The ground has been known to give way suddenly under the traveller's feet and water to spurt forth, commanding prudence.

Since 1860 the woodman's hatchet has no more disturbed the sacred silence of the forest of Biłowieża, which gives shelter to a very rich fauna. Formerly the government authorised, every year, the free felling of 10,000 trunks and even more, but this has now been forbidden because the cutting of wood and the noise resulting from it seem to contribute to a reduction in the number of bisons.

This forest constitutes the greatest natural curiosity of Podlachia. The towns which have sprung up here are everywhere of little

importance, apart from the two centres which dominate the north and south of the country. The capital of the northern region is Bialostock, the most Polish of Lithuanian towns, and now the centre of an industrial district. Active trade is carried on in this town, which, after the example of various towns in the neighbourhood, is noted for its cloth manufactories. Brest-Litowsk is for the south of Podlachia what Bialostock is for the north. The importance of Brest-Litowsk consists in this, that quite near to the town several tributaries flow into the Bug and several valleys meet there concentrically. Near to Brest-Litowsk is situated the confluence of the Muchawitzza, the Liesna, which flows from the north-east, and the Krzwa, which comes from the south-west.

The Castle of Verki, near Vilna.

In the reports relating to the eastern theatre of the war the name of the river Viliya is mentioned daily. Standing on its banks is the town of Vilna, the capital of Lithuania and the most important railway junction of the Wirballen-Petrograd line.

Less known to the general public (although figuring on the majority of maps) is the little village of Verki, which is also situated on the above-named river, a little below Vilna and about half an hour's distance from that town.

The Castle of Verki, situated on a hill on the right bank of the stream, was for a long time in the hands of the Germans, and until about seventeen years ago, when it passed into those of the Russians. It belonged to the wife of the former German Chancellor, Princess von Hohenlohe, who inherited it from her brother Prince Pierre Wittgenstein, the Lieutenant General and Adjutant General of the Emperor of Russia, at the same time as a whole group of other large properties extending over five of the western governments as far as the banks of the Pripet, and many hundreds of thousands of acres of forest-land in the Government of Minsk.

The Castle of Verki dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was formerly the residence of the Archbishop of Vilna, Prince Massalski, who was later assassinated. The property was purchased from the deceased's family by Prince Louis Wittgenstein whose widow — almost a centenarian — still lives at Ouchy. Prince Louis left it to his eldest son Pierre, the issue from his

marriage with Princess Stephanie Radziwill, the heiress of one of the oldest princely families of Lithuania. When Prince Pierre died without posterity, Verki passed into the possession of his only sister, Princess von Hohenlohe. By special permission of the Tzar she received the right to own the castle during her lifetime, but after her death the castle, as well as all the properties in her possession, were to be sold, in conformity with a Ukase of 1887, forbidding all Germans to acquire properties in the governments of the west; in the case of a heritage, obliging them to sell them three years afterwards, and only to Russian subjects of the Orthodox religion. Even Russian subjects of Polish or Lithuanian nationality were excluded, as well as all Catholic Jews or Protestants.

Of the Castle of Verki as it was in the days of Archbishop Massalski, only two wings — one of which forms the present castle and the other the administration of the estate — had been preserved. Princes Louis and Pierre Wittgenstein enlarged and embellished both the interior and exterior of the building. It contained a large hall with beautiful Flemish tapestries and ancient armour of the Radziwill family, a fine library, and very comfortable furniture. In the galleries and on the staircase were to be seen numerous trophies of the chase from princely forests: bear, wolf and lynx skins, etc. The most remarkable curiosity of the estate was certainly the park, which was under the care of a skilful French gardener. It contained pretty parterres *à la Française*, magnificent flower-beds and groups of trees, greenhouses in which delicious melons, peaches, apricots, strawberries, pine-apples and other fruits ripened, ponds swarming with carp, and vivaria for the breeding of trout. Celebrated throughout the whole district, it became a place of pilgrimage for the inhabitants of Vilna.

The castle was illuminated with gas, which produced a striking impression after the visitor had travelled through a solitary, forest-covered country.

The castle and park are situated on a sort of plateau, well above the river Vilija, which flows through the country with many picturesque sinuosities. Further off, on one of its banks, you could also see the walls of a convent and, on the horizon, behind some trees, the towers of a Catholic church. All around, the view is cut off by forests. Immediately after leaving the park, you enter the forest, where there was a zoological garden, in which

big game was reared, and, hidden amongst the trees, numerous idyllic lakes, the home of large coveys of wild duck.

Verki was a place of many rare charms. Prince von Hohenlohe, when Chancellor of the German Empire, spent a few weeks of each autumn there. About 1850 he lived several years there, and his father-in-law handed over to him the administration of his immense properties. However, politics once more absorbed his attention and Verki hardly saw him again.

We know nothing at the present time of the fate of this magnificent residence, which, perhaps, has already been consigned to the flames. It is not impossible that, owing to the situation of its park, a battery was installed there to fire on Vilna, and, after the war, there will probably remain nothing save the ruins of this fine property, celebrated throughout the whole of Lithuania.

The fall of Brest-Litowsk.

Long before the war, Brest-Litowsk occupied an important place in history. One after the other, the Princes of Volhynia, the German Knights, the Poles and the Lithuanians fought for the possession of the town. The last to hold it were the Lithuanians, under whom it attained a certain amount of prosperity.

It was here, in 1563, that the Protestants printed the first Bible in Polish, and in 1596 a council was held with the object of bringing about a union of the churches of the western provinces with Rome. Afterwards, Brest-Litowsk had a very chequered lot; in 1657, it fell, momentarily, into the hands of the Swedes, and it is only since 1793 that it has been under the sceptre of the Tsars.

The town itself, which is two kilometres from the fortress, presents nothing remarkable. It has a very mixed population; half of the inhabitants are Russians and Lithuanians, with a good sprinkling of Jews and Armenians. Brest-Litowsk has many churches, synagogues and places for prayer; but none of the buildings are remarkable architecturally. The only ornament of the town is the former castle of the Kings of Poland, with its park, which belongs to the Tsar. The Jews possess at Brest-Litowsk a high school which has a great reputation among the Jews of the East.

The burning of Brest-Litowsk.

As in the case of Vladimir Volynski and Nowo-Alexandrija, the Russians burnt Brest-Litowsk before abandoning it. The greater part of this large town is now reduced to ruins. Along the whole route from the exterior works to the centre of the town you meet nothing but ruin after ruin. The interior forts are destroyed; the beautiful railway station is a confused mass of stones and mortar; the market-place presents an extraordinary appearance: a confusion of iron stoves and piles of blackened bricks. All the principal quarters of the town are burnt to the ground. There is nothing save shattered, smoke-blackened walls and tottering chimneys. The railway line is obstructed by red waggons, shattered and overturned. Amongst all this you see the bodies of dead cattle and destroyed goods. Where the houses were spared by the flames the Russian soldiers completed the destruction. Everywhere, furniture and utensils reduced to match-wood! An imposing and bright-looking church, with blue domes and shining golden crosses, stands solitary in the midst of this vast place of destruction, which only yesterday was the home of 50,000 inhabitants.

Chronicle.

Letter from a Lithuanian Soldier of the Russian Army.

Petrograd, August 29.

Hospital N.....

Dear Friend,

For a long time I have intended to send to you news, but the exigencies of a soldier's life left me hardly any time. War at this part of the front is a hard task, for, week after week, nay, month after month, the adversary has given us no rest. Notwithstanding the heavy losses we inflicted upon him, he renewed his attempts to pierce our lines with untiring tenacity. We have spent days and nights under the rain of shot and shell; it was a veritable hell, and, after seeing my companions fall around me, I wonder how I myself escaped with but a slight wound, which, it is thought, will necessitate only a few weeks rest.

Now that you are made easy regarding my fate I must give you a little news about our country and compatriots. As you must know, the majority of us, Lithuanians, are serving in Siberian and Caucasian regiments, — those very regiments whose courage and bravery is so much praised in the European Press, judging by what you told me in your preceding letters. There is nothing astonishing in the fact that, in western countries, they took us for Asiatics, in accordance with the denomination of these regiments. People in Europe seem to be unaware of the methods of the Russian Governments, which, after the manner of Germany, sends recruits from the non-Russian provinces of the western frontier of the Empire to serve in the Far East and places Orientals in our country.

After fighting for a long time in Galicia and in the Carpathians, we were happy to be detached, by chance, with other troops to repel the German advance in Lithuania, but our hearts were sorely afflicted on arriving when we found that the districts not yet invaded were nothing more than a desert, a heap of ruins, and that we met convoys of unfortunate refugees, who were dragged from their homes, which, under our very eyes, were then destroyed. They formed a lamentable procession, for these wretched people, deeply attached to their native soil, would have preferred to have died under the ruins of their cottages rather than be driven forth with the butt-ends of the soldier's rifles. Several of us recognised, among these fugitives, relatives and friends, who expressed to us their indignation at being refused the right to die where they had been born and where their ancestors had lived.

My soul revolted at the sight of the moral and physical sufferings of my compatriots, and I could not help asking myself why they were treated in such a manner. Black thoughts obsess me. Even now, I cannot understand why Russia, which has occupied our land for a century, did not take the necessary steps to protect these people against a foreign invasion. Why did they refuse to allow us to organise the defence of our western frontier, and to recruit among our own people the soldiers for the regiments necessary for the defence of our native land? For it would have been much sweeter to have died in saving our country from invasion than to go and sacrifice ourselves in Galicia or the Caucasus, in a country which is absolutely foreign to us. We have sufficiently proved, in the course of our history, that, during centuries, we were capable of stopping the German tide. Did not our Grand Duke Vitovt prepare and carry out the victory of Tannenberg (1410), at the very spot where the Russians were beaten last year by the Germans?

Who is responsible for the successive defeats of the Russian armies? It is the bureaucracy or the high command? Or have the Russians been the victims of numerous acts of treason? It seems to me that all have contributed. The centralising and police-ridden regime, without control and without responsible government, has, through its accumulated errors, prepared the downfall, the first victim of which will be our unfortunate country.

It is true that the Government has recognised its past errors and is trying to remedy them, but I fear that it is too late. It has already condemned the errors of the military authority, which would never allow the non-Russian nationalities of the Empire to look after the defence of their own countries, and it has authorised the creation of exclusively Lithuanian and Lettish regiments. But, alas, this authorisation has come too late. Not only is the greater part of our country in the hands of the enemy, but the finest sons of Lithuania are already died by tens of thousands, in the Carpathians and elsewhere, and there now remains among my countrymen but few men to form these regiments.

Notwithstanding the present disastrous situation of my country, I still hope that out of this cruel war there will come a better future for it, and that, through the immense sacrifices we have made in the common interest of Russia and the Allies, the Lithuanian people will at last recover the independence they lost a hundred years ago, — that independence which alone will enable them to repair the ruin caused by this war.

If I die during the next fighting, I beg you to tell my family and friends that we gave our blood in the firm hope that Lithuania will become free and independent.

Yours, etc.,

A.-K. Gintautas,
Second lieutenant. X..... Regiment.

A Protest.

An active propaganda to the prejudice of the Ukraine and Lithuania is being made at this moment throughout Europe, including Switzerland, to prepare public opinion for the eventual annexation of the Ukraine and Lithuania to a future Poland, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

While desiring sincerely the independence of Poland and the re-establishment of her national and ethnographical frontiers, we protest with the utmost energy against any attempt of this kind.

Affected to the highest point by these projects which strike a blow at our most sacred rights, we are obliged to repeat for those who are ignorant of or who pretend to be ignorant of it, that neither the Ukrainians nor the Lithuanians are Poles any more than Russians. They are no more Poles than the Belgians or Swiss are French or German, than the Roumanians are Greek or Turkish, the Danes Swedish, the Finns Russian, the Czecks and Hungarians German, the Poles themselves Russian or German. The so-called "historical" rights according to which Naples and Netherland should be Spanish, Lombardy and Venetia Austrian, the canton of Vaud Italian, etc., have no value for us when opposed to the rights of each nationality to its own independence, to its own existence. To submit the Ukraine and Lithuania to the domination of Poland would be as unjust as to restore the Balkan States to Turkey. To render this notion acceptable we are represented as peoples without history or culture, without rights, nomads perhaps on the "Polish soil."

They forget that Lithuania, up to the XVI century, was a powerful State and that she also ruled over vast territories, three times more extensive than those of Poland. At the present day the intellectual level of the Lithuanian people is superior to that of the Polish people, the percentage of educated Lithuanians being 52.01 while that of the Poles is 34.78 (statistics of 1897, the most recent). Most of the Lithuanian peasants and workmen read the newspapers while in Poland this luxury is confined rather to the intellectual and middle classes. Numerous educational, scientific, artistic, economic societies and social organisations have been created from the Lithuanian people's own resources. The Lithuanian literature which dates from the XVI century and which had already produced master-pieces (a national epic poem) at the end of the XVIII century, is now in full development.

The Ukraine, the native land of Vladimir, of Chmielnicki, of Mazeppa, whose history is a glorious and secular struggle for liberty, possesses a literature richer than any other Slav literature, after that of the Russians and Poles it is true, but superior to that of the Czecks, the Serbians and Bulgarians, etc. In spite of all the obstacles she has to contend with, she possesses scientific, economic, intellectual and artistic institutions, a large press, rich national museums, etc.

Such are thes peoples whom the Poles would like to represent to Europe as barbarians, whose civilization, according to them, is the his-

toric task of Poland. Would it not be better that the Poles, instead of pretending to civilize the Lithuanians and Ukrainians, should begin by the civilization of their own people, more backward than the Lithuanians and Ukrainians.

We must also put foreign opinion on guard against the allegations of Polish Lithuanians or Lithuanian Poles(?) as well as Polish Ukrainians(?) who are either Poles established in Lithuania or the Ukraine or else Ukrainians and Lithuanians polonised. Thus, when they tell us that they desire to be united to Poland, we are not astonished but it is our duty to remind them that they represent an infinitesimal Polish minority scattered throughout the Ukraine and Lithuania and have no right to speak in the name of the Ukrainians and Lithuanians. It is nothing but a serious stratagem on the part of the Poles.

Our sentiments towards the Poles are not those of an unconscious hatred, but on the contrary those of a reasonable uneasiness! There is no question for us of imposing our supremacy over the Poles or of attaching them on their soil, but only of defending our own. We repeat: we wish them the greatest possible success in re-establishing their independence. May they be free and happy, masters of their own destinies and in their own land as we intend to be in ours.

Editor of "Pro Lithuania".

Editor of "L'Ukraine".

German proclamation at Vilna.

After the occupation of Vilna by the German troops, the commanding general published the following proclamation:

To the inhabitants of Vilna,

The German forces have driven out the Russian army from the Polish (?) town of Vilna and have made their entry into this noble town. She was always a pearl in the glorious kingdom of Poland (?), the friend of the German nation. The German army is full of sympathy for the Polish (?) population, so sorely tried. It sees with indignation the offences committed by the Russian authorities against the inhabitants and their possessions.

It is needless to say that the fires which light up the neighbouring villages have been kindled by the Russians.

German authority will do all in its power to render the calamities of the war — which has been forced upon them — more bearable to the Polish (?) population.

Commerce and all the peaceful occupations of the inhabitants will be encouraged. The supervision of the order and quietness of the town will remain in the hands of the magistrates who have exercised it up to the present time. Only disturbances which the town authorities might find them selves unable to quell would force me to employ military

force. I rely on the love of liberty and the peaceful disposition of the citizens of Vilna to prevent them undertaking any action against the German army or any part of it.

Such acts are most severely punished by the laws of war.

I do not wish to inflict any punishment in the town of Vilna.

God bless Poland! (?)

Vilna, 18th September 1915.

(Signed) General Comte Pfeil.

N. B. — We reproduce this proclamation purely as a document and we do not know which ought to astonish us more, the ignorance of General Comte Pfeil as regards geography and history or his want of truthfulness.

So far as we have been able to judge up to now by the articles in the German press (some of which are reproduced here), the informations given about Lithuania and its inhabitants is, with a few exceptions, fairly exact, and it seems to us all the more surprising that this German general should consider Vilna as a Polish town and should call it "pearl of the glorious kingdom of Poland"?

This general has seemingly never heard that Vilna has always been the capital of Lithuania and will remain so in the future. It is not from a few inhabitants more or less polonised and the presence of a Polish and polonising clergy, detested by the people, that one can conclude that the town is Polish.

One might suppose from the style of this proclamation, where the words Poland and Polish are repeated in every line, that this commander wished to make himself an instrument of the Polonising policy. (Ed.)

The Lithuanian Question raised at the Congress of Berne.

by Mr. C. Lindhagen, mayor of Stockholm, deputy to the Riksdag.

Mr. Carl Lindhagen, mayor of Stockholm, deputy to the Riksdag, has sent to the Conference in favour of a lasting peace, at Berne (14th-16th December), a report concerning the nationalities affected by the war. Here is the text of this eminent man's letter, which was joined to the report,

To the Conference for a lasting peace, at Berne,

14th-15th December 1915.

The undersigned — elected as delegate to the Conference by the Swedish Society for peace and arbitration, but who will probably be prevented from attending — begs to propose that the Conference should adhere to the resolutions herewith, accepted by the General Congress of Sweden and presented to all parliaments and to all governments. Among these resolutions particularly recommend to the attention of the Conference at Berne those marked by dashes in the enclosed copy.

To the question of the nationalities which appear in the order of the day, those of Poland, Finland, Alsace-Lorraine and North Schleswig, must be added the questions of Lithuania, the Ukraine and Armenia

and a rational solution of the Balkan question by a division of the States carried out, as far as possible, in conformity with the principle of nationalities. Finally, I beg to propose that the conference should pronounce in favour of a universal language, easily accessible and to be introduced by an international convention into all the schools in the world.

Stockholm, 24th October 1915.

Carl Lindhagen, mayor of Stockholm,
member of the Swedish Parliament.

N. B. — We draw our reader's attention to the fact that this eminent pacifist considers the just solution of the Lithuanian question, amongst several others, as condition sine qua non of a lasting peace. Ed.

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