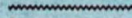


A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

LITHUANIA, like heroic Belgium, was completely devastated; her cities and villages have been reduced to ruins; and her population (over three millions) has been martyred.

The Male inhabitants were forced to take arms, while Women and Children, deprived of shelter, are starving and need urgent relief, not only in the name of Humanity, but also in that of Love for our neighbor.

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It is the object of the editor in editing
this pamphlet to conduct it along strictly
neutral lines.

J. J. K.
Editor.





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A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

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The Land of Sorrow

The European war has brought ruin, devastation and caused intense suffering in Lithuania, once a glorious and mighty kingdom, stretching in vast area from the Baltic to the Black Sea, but at present it embracing only the provinces of Suvalki, Grodno, Vilna, Kovno, part of Courland, and East Prussia.

Being divided between Germany and Russia, the Lithuanians, serving in two opposing armies, are compelled to slay each other. The Lithuanians have inhabited the Nieman region and the Baltic provinces for hundreds of years. The peaceful blue-eyed people are Indo-Aryans, related neither to Slavs nor Teutons. The Lithuanian Grand Duke Vitautas first crushed the Teutonic invaders at Gruenwald in 1410. He helped Russia to liberate itself from the Tartar yoke and checked the Mongolian invasion of Western Europe, thus saving civilization in its beginning.

Since the very start of the present European war Lithuania became the scene of the most horrible struggle ever enacted on the face of the earth. As a consequence Lithuania suffered greater devastation than any other country, since its destruction was absolute. Vast areas in the government of Kovno and Suvalki present a most appalling sight; once flourishing villages and cities were razed, for miles there is not a hut standing, even trees have been cut down by shell fire as by a tornado.

The misery and suffering of the unfortunate populace

is indescribable. It is beyond human power to relieve the grief, the mental anguish, the tortures of those afflicted by this calamity. Many die of wounds, many are driven mad. Some in agony destroy themselves, while protesting against the evil that overwhelmed humanity. Too proud to receive sympathy and offended by the sight of human degradation, for relief they cast their glance toward the sky, but the gloomy obscured horizon reflects only flames of the conflagrations devouring their unfortunate blood-covered Fatherland. They hear the roar of cannons that sounds to them like laughter of the inferno, mocking at human misery, at the utopian dreams of universal brotherhood, at the attempts of doctriners and preachers of love to elevate the ever envious, ever greedy, ever hating humanity. Not consoled by a ray of hope from anywhere, in deepest despair they seek the tragic end.

But there are many others, destitute old mothers, little children, who strive to live in spite of all the horrors they have witnessed. For the sake of these unfortunate we appeal to the great American people, who helped many other war-stricken nations, to extend also a helping hand at this critical moment to these involuntary victims of the war, to save them, that the old, noble nation of Lithuania may not perish.

PIERRE STEPONAS VILLMONT.

"If Nero had lived in our time, he would not have a need to burn Rome for an inspiring sight. On the shores of River Nieman, Vilna, Dubisa, he could behold a spectacle of greater magnitude, longer duration, more intense than that of ancient Rome. Here Nero could satiate his desire with sight of burning old castles, churches, cities, villages; he could see torrents of blood and streams of tears; his lyre would break under tension to express the awe, the grandeur, the pathos of this tragedy."—*From a speech by S. SHIMKUS.*

Lithuanian History

Lithuania's history, which has not yet been told well, or thoroughly investigated, dates from the thirteenth century. At that time the Lithuanians, confined between the Slavonians and Germans and unable to rely upon natural frontiers in their struggles against their neighbors, being also between two civilizations, Oriental and Occidental—Greek Christianity on one side and the Roman Church on the other—not only managed to keep their national existence and their national habits, but extended their dominions to the Black Sea.

Until the thirteenth century the Lithuanians lived in clans in their forests; they had a communal organization. The necessity of defending themselves against the Germans (the Teutonic and Sword-Bearing Knights), their spirit of independence and religion compelled the Lithuanians at the beginning of the thirteenth century to gather around a small number of chiefs, and then they had a single head chief. At that time Rimgaudas (Ryngold), the first Grand Duke of Lithuania, gained several victories over the Mongolians, and stopped their march toward Occidental Europe. He afterwards established his dominion over the Russians, who were weakened by the Mongolian invasions. This sovereign of Lithuania extended the limits of his country as far as Polotsk and Vitebsk.

After him, Mindaugis tried by every means to accomplish Lithuanian unity. He had to fight against the Russians and the Poles and against the Sword-Bearers and the Teutonic Knights. In order to resist these Knights he appealed to the Pope and was baptized in

1252. However, as the German Monks continued their hospitalities, Mindaugis stirred up the Lithuanians, in 1260, to resist the Teutonic Knights, whom he defeated in 1261.

He was assassinated in 1263, before his work was finished, and Lithuania was drenched in blood in the revenge taken by the sons of Mindaugis on the murderers of their father, and so the country fell into anarchy, which lasted twenty years.

Vitenas, Mindaugis's successor, re-established order. Gedeminas (1314-1340), head of the Jagellons dynasty, was the real founder of the Lithuanian power. He was very successful against the Russians, occupied Volynia and advanced as far as Kiev.

At the time Lithuania was at the height of her greatness and had to be taken into consideration by the Western peoples as one of the obstacles which opposed the Mongolians, who, after invading Western Europe, would surely have ruined European civilization in its very cradle.

It was owing to the Lithuanians, historically speaking, that that disaster did not occur.

Realizing that Lithuania could no longer stand alone, Gediminas formed alliances with the various peoples in Western Europe, ruled the country in an orderly manner, drew it into foreign artisans and artists, and opened up negotiations with the Hansa towns.

He even began arrangements with the Pope to establish Christianity forever in Lithuania, but the Germans (Teutonic Knights and Sword-Bearers) succeeded, by their plots, in preventing this from being done. Dominican and Franciscan friars were allowed, however, to preach in Lithuania and to build churches.

After a period of trouble following upon the death

of Gediminas, two of his sons, Algirdas (1345-1377) and Keistutis, ruled together. Their reign was marked by wars with the Teutonic Knights, the Poles, the Tartars, and the Muskovites. Algirdas, victorious over these latter, marched three times up to Moscow and invaded the Crimea. At his death Lithuania had extended her dominions from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and from the Bug to the sources of the Donetz. Keistutis was at the same time fighting the Germans, who wanted to conquer Lithuania at any cost.

Jagello, the son of Algirdas, by his marriage with Hedwige, united Lithuania with Poland and established the Christian religion once for all in Lithuania. But Jagello's marriage (in 1386) does not mark the end of Lithuanian nationality, as is asserted by several Polish historians. Jagello left the Grand Ducal throne to his cousin, Vytautas, who did his best to secure and keep the independence of Lithuania, which, being three times as large as Poland, could never become a Polish province, as is claimed by some historians.

Indeed, the large principality of Lithuania at the time of its union with Poland in 1386, included:

1. Lithuania, properly so called, viz., the basin of the Nieman and that of its tributary, the Vilija (Neris), with Vilna as the metropolis.
2. Samogitia (Zemaitija).
3. White Russia, viz., the ancient Russian Principalities of Polotsk and Vitebsk.
4. Black Russia, with towns of Kiev, the old Russian metropolis, and the towns of Chernigov and Perejaslaw.
5. Volynia and Podolia, with Brest-Litovsk, Lutsk and Cherson.

Lithuania was then the largest European State of the time; from the forest of Samogitia to the Southern

steppes, it spread from one sea to the other. Unfortunately that State had no national unity. The Lithuanians, properly so called, were less numerous than the Russians. They had no unity in religion; a part of Lithuania, in the centre and in the north, was still heathen; Catholicism predominated in the West, and the East and Southeast were Greek and Greek Orthodox. Such an ill assorted State founded on conquests only, could not last.

The natural course of its history was interrupted by Jagello's marriage. After embracing Catholicism, he endeavored to make Lithuania a Catholic country. The new direction continued even when Jagello, being forced to choose between two crowns, had to leave Lithuania to his cousin, Vytautas, who undertook with the Poles, his allies, that great campaign against the Teutonic Order, which ended in a complete victory at Gruenwald (1410).

Vytautas would have liked to make the large principality a realm equal to Poland in dignity, free from all Polish interference, but the jealousy of the Poles prevented him from carrying out this task. After Vytautas's death (1430) his successors secured Lithuania's independence, that country having been united until the second part of the sixteenth century by a mere dynastic tie. At that time one could foresee in Poland the early extinction of Jagello's dynasty—that is, the disappearance of the only political tie that united the two countries. From these events the "Political Union" in 1569 resented.

The nobility of both countries agreed that both should be united under the same head, Poland and Lithuania, to keep their respective laws, armies and grand dignitaries, and each country its own Marshall, Chancellor and headmen. By special agreement the greater part of the provinces of Southern Russia, which had been previously annexed to Lithuania, were to be united

with Poland. The government of these two United States was like the dualism of Austria-Hungary. Though Lithuania kept its independence, the "Union of Lublin" opened wide the doors of Lithuania to the Poles, and from that time the "Polonisation" of the country was inevitable.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, some Lithuanian noblemen, like Radzivill, Czartoryski, made themselves Poles. Fortunately, the inferior classes remained faithful to their national traditions. The peasant and the Samogitian nobility were unaffected by Polonisation.

The Polish-Lithuanian State became a kind of confederate kingdom without any central administration and whose joint executive was a king, paralyzed by diets, by government officers appointed for life, or by confederations in such or such provinces. That union did more evil than good to both States. Anarchy, which reigned in Poland, corrupted the Lithuanian nobility, who thought of nothing but taxing the people and weakening royalty. The peasants were oppressed by the noblemen; the Orthodox complained about the Catholics; certain magnates, like Radzivill, had an army of their own and were real potentates. There was no Third Estate; the Jews, who inhabited towns, had no political rights. There was no regular army. The country was rent by the Orthodox, and the Lithuanians solicited the protection of Russia and Prussia. Lithuania tried repeatedly to separate herself from Poland (Janus Radzivill), but did not succeed. Anarchy was at its height under the reign of the Saxon August (1733-1763). At his death the factions looked towards Maria-Theresa and Catharine to ask for their mediation.

Then Russians, Prussians and Austrians came in, for Poland and Lithuania having no army were unable to

resist invaders. Frederick was the first to attempt to dismember Poland and Lithuania, and was clever enough to deceive Maria-Theresa and Catharine to join him. The first partition took place on the 25th of July, 1772, the second in 1792, and the third in 1795. By these three successive divisions the greater part of Lithuania was annexed to Russia and a smaller part to Germany.

Since then, Lithuania has not been submitted to any more territorial modification. Politically destroyed, divided between the Russian government of Vilna, Kovna, Grodna, Minsk, Mohilev, Vitebsk, her name has been erased from the map of Europe. In 1849 an ukase forbade the official use of the name of Lithuania, which was to be replaced by the insignificant geographical one of North-Western Country.

The era of Martyrdom began for the Lithuanian nation; the Russification was more and more intense. The chief facts of it were: The removal of Vilna University to Kiev; the persecution directed first against the Uniates and afterwards against the Catholics; the suppression of the Lithuanian Statute and its substitution by the Russian Code; the bloody repression of the insurrections in 1813 and 1863; the exile of many Lithuanians and the confiscation of their estates.

These violent measures have altogether caused less evil to the Lithuanian nation than the prohibition of using any more of the Latin type in the Lithuanian literature, which had been adopted as a result of the Western civilization in the sixteenth century.

Instead of the prescribed characters, the government imposed its Russian ones (*grajdanka*), so that it would be able, by that means, to exert over the Lithuanian people a greater influence.

But it was repulsed with dignity by the Lithuanians, who preferred rather than accept that present of Danaos,

to content themselves, during forty years, with books printed in Prussian Lithuania and secretly imported from Germany.

It is impossible to estimate the moral loss caused to the Lithuanian nation by that woeful prohibition. The whole of it was condemned; without the press, that indispensable instrument of national instruction, did not vegetate during the latter half of the nineteenth century (1864-1904).

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the Lithuanians, deprived of the means of asserting their existence, were considered like a nation that was no more.

Even these brutal ways did not kill the Lithuanian nation, as was wanted by certain Russian statesmen (Mouravieff), but, on the contrary, they awakened national conscience; in 1883 appeared at Tilsit the patriotic Lithuanian journal "Ausra" (Aurora). It was founded by the great patriot, J. Basanovic, and imported secretly in Russian Lithuania. The national Propagandism in Lithuanian spread more and more. "Ausra" (Aurora) was soon replaced by several other patriotic newspapers. "Varpas" (The Bell), "Ukinikas" (The Farmer), which were read in all Lithuania, in spite of the greatest severity of Russian authorities. Thus, Lithuania, to preserve her literature in the original types, fought against Russia during forty years.

The hundred thousands of Lithuanian books, printed in Latin characters, at Tilsit, and brought in contraband to Lithuania, were confiscated by Russian officials and burned. On the other hand, the thousands of books distributed by Russian authorities, in Russian types, bore the same fate—they were also burned by the indignant people.

At last, this far from indignant fight ended in 1904, when Russia, perceiving the wrongs done to Lithuania,

revoked the former ukases and re-established the use of the primitive Latin types.

That action had the greatest consequences; the Lithuanians, acknowledged again by Russia as being a distinct nation, ceased to be, for their neighbors "an ethnical matter" national consciousness took a considerable extension with the help of the press.

But oppression went on under various shapes to exterminate the Lithuanian nation. It is impossible to retrace them; the people tried to save themselves from its rigor, and they, in great numbers, left the country of their forefathers to secure liberty on the other side of the ocean. In that manner Lithuania, during the last part of the nineteenth century, gave the United States of America about one million of immigrants.

The movement of freedom which took place in Russia in 1904-1906 found Lithuania ready for events. The nation, though remaining loyal, showed her vitality in convoking at Vilna, her former capital, on the 4th of December, 1905, a national assembly, composed of several hundred delegates selected among the clergy and the Lithuanian nobility and coming from all parts of the country. It was decided that Lithuania could no longer content itself with her actual lot, but wanted a national autonomy that would permit her to develop freely. The political events which followed prevented the realization of that decision.

The mere facts of the convocation of a National Assembly by a nation which was considered dead by all her neighbors proves her complete awakening and her existence. Actually, Lithuania, in creating societies, in publishing a great number of newspapers and books, gains every day upon the lost in fetters and works to occupy, among the nations of humanity, the place to which her past entitles her.

J. J. K.

Twenty-seven Thousand Millions Spent on War

Suppose the nations had made up their minds to fight Nature's mistakes and diseases instead of fighting one another.

More than twenty-seven thousand millions of dollars have been spent in eighteen months of war. Millions of lives have been sacrificed and property destroyed that can never be replaced.

Consider just now only the waste of MONEY, of human power.

Think of what could have been done to make this earth better with all the thousands of millions spent.

And to console yourself, remember that the day WILL come when human beings, no longer savages, will spend their thousands of millions upon improvement of the earth, and no longer upon murder.

Twenty-seven thousand millions spent for KILLING. Less than one-half of ONE thousand millions built the Panama Canal.

One of those thousand millions would make Chicago a seaport, connecting the Great Lakes with the Gulf, enabling the big ships to cross either ocean, go through the Panama Canal and up to Chicago and the other Lake cities for their loads.

ONE thousand millions would irrigate our great Western desert, making millions upon millions of acres fertile, giving farms and homes to hundreds of thousands of families, adding to the wealth and to the health of the world.

A small fraction of the money spent in eighteen months for murder would make it possible to tear out every one of the disease-breeding slums in the world's great cities.

Without injury to any man's "rights or property" all slum tenements could be torn down, all narrow streets in great cities could be widened, adequate sewers could be provided, new healthful dwelling places constructed in place of the disease-breeding grounds destroyed.

One or two of the thousands of millions spent on murder would mean the saving of millions of children's lives NOW, and the decrease of unnecessary deaths in the future. In the end it would mean saving hundreds of millions of lives.

Less than one-tenth of the money spent in eighteen months for murder would WIPE CONSUMPTION FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH.

The spending of that sum would let in the sunlight where it is needed, because those that are now spreading the dreadful disease to lead different lives, saving not only themselves but others whom they constantly infect.

A tenth of the amount spent on murder in eighteen months would place and endow great universities in every important centre of population.

A twentieth part of the expenditure would clean up the Oriental plague spots in China and in India, that breed diseases and send them to us, and that particular breeding place of disease, Mecca, where the admirers of Mohammed go to give their diseases to one another and send them on to us.

If the kings and emperors of Europe instead of deciding to fight ONE ANOTHER had decided to spend a thousand millions of dollars fighting MOSQUITOES, yellow fever and malaria would have been driven from the earth in a few years, AND WITHOUT LOSS OF HUMAN LIFE.

The elimination of the mosquito by the draining of swamps and the maintaining of quarantine would destroy the malaria which makes millions of lives miserable and useless, and the yellow fever that kills almost as quickly as a bullet.

If only the nations calling themselves civilized had decided to fight Nature's mistakes, the worst diseases and IGNORANCE, the greatest disease of all, what wonders could have been done with a small part of the twenty-seven thousand millions of dollars worse than thrown away.

Civilization might have been put forward five hundred years, and NOT A LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN SACRIFICED NEEDLESSLY.

As it is, the world must save and suffer for a generation to make up what has been wasted.

The mothers must begin again the task of populating the earth, taking up the weary burden that they have

carried through ages, producing children to replace those killed by plague, famine and man's brutality.

Let us hope at least that the human race will have learned a lesson.

Let us hope that this war will really be the last, in spite of the sneers of the cynics.

And let us be PREPARED THOROUGHLY, with all the armament that we need TO MAKE SURE THAT NO SUCH PLAGUE OF MURDER SHALL EVER VISIT THIS COUNTRY.

J. K.

A Letter from the War Zone

"Krasny, Smolensk Province.

"Dear Brothers:—

"I let you know that at present we are residing in the village of Avadova, Smolensk Province, where we also expect to pass the winter. We are pale and worn-out.

"My mother and your mother is no more, dear brothers—she died on the way while fleeing from the ravages of war. The affliction which gripped our dear mother was very agonizing, lasting for three weeks, until she passed into an everlasting sleep.

"When I saw that our good and dear mother was going to part from us, I wanted to obtain whatever little shelter I could, and of whatever little benefit it may be, to pay my last respects to her; for we were no longer able to endure the cold winds and the dampness of the open fields. In order that we may not be so cold, we tarried in the forest, where we built a little fire to protect us from the cold. Under the sheltering trees of the forest our mother ended her suffering. She died, leaving us, apart from the suffering of the cold, with a sad and aching heart.

"She died at night. Just before daybreak a cold frost was covering the trees of the forest and the surface of the earth that would have frozen us alive, but mother's body had already been cold and stiff.

"There being no Catholic churches or priests here, it was necessary to let her die and be buried without the administration of the last funeral rites.

"The disease with which our mother was afflicted is

called the 'disease of the blood,' technically known as dysentery.

"Scarcely had mother been buried when sister Anna was stricken with the very same disease. And she would have scarcely recovered had we not stopped at Krasny and placed her in a hospital there. After Anna was taken care of in the hospital, we then proceeded to search for a place of shelter. The ground was covered with snow then and it was bitter cold, yet we were compelled to live under the open skies. Thanks to the Lord that we now have at least some sort of shelter.

"We live under a small wagon shed—we, Matelai and Lukoseviciai. Dear brothers, if you only knew how miserable our lives are to us now! Every day we have to go begging. We have nothing for ourselves, nor have we any feed for our horses—nothing!

"Four horses comprise our entire wealth. Not only are our lives so unendurable, but even all through Lithuania there prevail the same suffering, disease and death.

"We have already fled from four provinces and are now in the fifth, and from the circumstances we are not certain but that dangers are fast approaching. We have traveled during all of last summer and fall. Ever since the 9th of April, 1915, when we abandoned our home, we spent the time in the forests and fields, until we stopped at the above-mentioned place, Krasny. We have become most abject. It is impossible to relate here all the suffering that we have endured and are still undergoing. We are glad that we have at least survived death, for on two occasions we happened to be in the midst of two struggles between the belligerents. Bullets buzzed past us like bees.

"Oh, what terror there was—our hearts were breaking when we saw our buildings with the farm imple-

ments and animals wrapped in flames! The product of the labors and pains of our fathers and of ourselves were destroyed by fire! Many innocent people were killed. The water in the trenches is red with human blood. Grenades and dead bodies literally cover the fields. Oh, God, what our country has lived to witness and suffer! When shall the end of this gruesome sight appear! At least you, brothers, don't forget us; we will await your kind letter.

"Your brother,

"ANTH. KAMZURA."

A Letter from German-Occupied Lithuania

Previous to the outbreak of the war, June 24, 1914, Mrs. Marion Akromiene left South Omaha, Neb., on a journey across the Atlantic with her children to visit her aged parents in Lithuania. The letter is originally written in Lithuanian.

It is evident that the German censorship of the atrocities of war is very stringent.

The letter follows:

"I write to let you know that we are alive and well, having survived the conflagrations, uprisings and atrocities, only that the days and nights are not peaceful. Oh, how sad have been the days we have passed here.

We are very unhappy now when we realize why we had journeyed to the soil of unhappy Lithuania. Oh, my beloved husband, would that you had interred me with my dear children in a cold grave in South Omaha, rather than have left us to die on the soil of unfortunate Lithuania. Then our eyes would not witness such unimaginable atrocities and we wouldn't have to suffer such untold hardships. If we could only transform ourselves into bees and be transported to South Omaha, we could tell all our Lithuanian brothers and sisters what is taking place in our native country. I would make the journey to America, but without money it is impossible to go anywhere. Furthermore, my children need warm clothes, etc.

"There is no mail service in Lithuania, and we are compelled to go personally in search of our mail. This is my present address: Kurpitki, Kreisamt Kibarti bj. Ejdkunen, Deutschland (which was formerly Suvalku province, Vilkaviskis district, Kupiskiai P. O., Kurpiskiai village)."

An Appeal to the Lithuanian-Speaking People

The tempestuous furies of misfortune have been hurled upon our fatherland. Atrocious warfare, like a savage lion, has tortured dear Lithuania. The black crows are already cawing in anticipation of food.

Lithuania's wealth has perished in the conflagrations, and her beloved sons have either been slain or are wandering over the face of the earth as orphans. The entire fatherland, whose soil is the warriors' battleground, is strewn with the dead bodies of our dear brethren!

Glance at Lithuania—a virtual burying ground. The farmer no longer goes to his plow, for, indeed, he has nothing to sow; only the charred remains of factories appear; credit among venders and purchasers has ceased; refugees, returning from afar, are unable to recognize their native surroundings or to locate the landmarks of their former buildings; rarely will you see a person within miles.

Look into the great stretch of Russia, into snow-covered Siberia, and there you will find hundreds of thousands of our Lithuanian brethren, pale and worn out from cold and hunger. There they are sacrificing their health, morality and their very life.

Dying in the fatherland in order that their bones might rest on cherished soil; for, indeed, there the wolves shall bury the bodies and the crows shall be the sole mourners.

Not only there will you find a profusion of tears and suffering; large numbers of our fellow countrymen are suffering as prisoners. Out of the midst of Germany we hear the sad and mournful voice of the Lithuanians: "Give us bread, we are starving; give us clothes, for we are suffering from the cold; we are bare-footed and ragged, and we thirst for spiritual nourishment!" And so, not only the brave warriors, their persevering wives, but also the old men in agony, and the little children call.

Thus has fate decreed to these old men, who were desirous to rest their bones in that soil which has reared and nourished them while they tried in vain to perpetuate the name of their native country. And the little children, before they have attained the age to realize the maternal love, were snatched from the breasts of their mothers in the midst of the thunder and roar of cannon! They now call for the mothers that have borne them, and the mothers of their native land, and the first, separated from the latter, have already perished. If the cries of these children can be heard, they are of no avail, for their mothers can answer these cries only by tears.

When Mars's tempest had swept over Belgium the whole world sadly sighed and extended a bountiful helping hand. At the present time the Poles are swamped with letters containing millions in aid.

But who concerns themselves in behalf of the Lithuanians? NO ONE! OR SCARCELY ANYONE! EXCEPT THE LITHUANINAS THEMSELVES. Other nations being worthy of it, is it possible that Lithuania is not worthy of help? Have not the Lithuanians merited it? Indeed, so the truth stands, they are worthy of it, for they are suffering innocently, and Lithuania has merited relief for herself, for she has played her role in history.

As long as we are some one, we Lithuanians of Frei-

bourg (Switzerland), looking back to the appeal of the Lithuanian refugees, turn to you. Brothers, extend a helping hand to these poor sufferers; aid them as much as you possibly can, with money, clothes, books and other useful articles.

Stories Related by Refugees from Lithuania

The Sunday before last there came to Chicago, we might say, the first Lithuanian refugees, Peter Saparnis and Anthony Drabisius. They are natives of the State of Pinava, and were residents of Panavezis, where they were proprietors of a large store. Upon invasion of the city by the Germans they abandoned their store, together with all their wealth, fleeing with other refugees, not knowing whither, nor where they would be able to rest or get sustenance. The hardships of their journey were almost unendurable, and the stories told by them sound like weird tales, which add effect to the disclosure of the present condition in Lithuania. It will seem curious to the reader to note from the stories they relate what they experienced and what they have seen, for, indeed, their fate is typical of the thousands of similar unfortunate sacrifices of war.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR

We can imagine the bustle and hurry of mobilization when the war began, the shedding of tears and the sadness of the people. At that time Panavezis was thronged with incoming travelers from the neighboring villages and towns—some being called to arms, some accompanied by escorts, while relatives had come to see their dear ones off to the front. There is no necessity to mention the profusion of tears.

Those called to arms were quickly assembled, arranged in groups, armed and sent to the front to fight, to make their first attack against the Germans.

After that, things became quiescent and life was beginning to assume its normal mode, only that the probable fear of not knowing what the morrow shall bring was growing. The worry and despair of those who had accompanied their loved ones on the way to the front was growing.

The second indication of war was soon manifested—the wounded soldiers were returning legless and armless—yet many were destined to never return, for they had laid down their lives on the battle fields.

Meanwhile the mobilization did not cease and new men were being conscripted. Many sad incidents often occurred. A mother had the opportunity to greet her son returning from the front wounded and worn out, while, on the other hand, she was forced to send a second son to the same fate.

Some of the returning wounded were horribly disfigured. There was a constant fear that the stage of the war threatened to be transported to Lithuania. And so it was.

THE FIRST GERMAN ATTACK

The first attack by the Germans was rather unexpected, for it was not even anticipated in military circles, from the fact that the Jews had departed from the country within twenty-four hours; and it is even intimated that the Jews were awaiting the invasion of the Germans and were spying in behalf of Germany. The first news that the Germans were not far off received came from the refugees in the neighborhood of the borders of Raseiniai, Tilsit and other parts of Lithuania. The people of these districts, on hearing the news of the ap-

proaching Germans, thronged into Panavezis. There they were given food and other necessary aid by the Lithuanian organization there, as well as by other benefactors. Simultaneously, Panavezis was deluged with wounded and crippled soldiers, and close behind followed the German cavalry. However, they did not reach Panavezis. The German column swept toward Panavezis, but ultimately turned to the village of Nausidis, which they burned down. Another column, sweeping south, reached Ramygala, Joskildus. The Jews at Ramygala greeted the Germans and supplied them with food. Most likely these same Jews, it is suggested, directed the Germans to the Lithuanian stores and places of business, for the Germans destroyed, carried off the goods or disposed of them to others.

The Germans usually took with them things of benefit, such as articles of food, animals and grain.

But the Germans did not continue this long. Larger and stronger forces of Russians, accompanied by Cossacks, soon appeared on the scene, and the Germans were compelled to quickly withdraw. The tables were turned. The Russian Cossacks, enraged at the Jews, destroyed their stores and places of business, carried away their goods, disposed of them in the villages, or keeping what was useful to them, threw the rest away. The Cossacks stopped at the farmers' homes to obtain food, for which they usually paid; but it is said, however, that if the best horse feed was not offered them, they would take it and pay nothing.

What a peaceful state matters assumed again after the Germans were forced to withdraw to Samogitia. After some time signs of terror again appeared. The police authorities posted notices everywhere commanding the farmers to cut the growing rye, to dig up the potatoes, be prepared to flee, and fleeing, to set fire to

their homes and destroy whatever they were unable to take with them. The summer crops had already been practically consumed; it was either already fed to the horses or trampled down under the feet of the moving armies.

There were many farmers who responded to the order, and cut their growing rye, but with the result that when they required payment therefor, they were refused. The only response they received was, "Who ordered you to cut it?"

The people began to entertain suspicions that the Germans would return again, and they did.

THE SECOND GERMAN ATTACK

The former incident was re-enacted. Panavezis was again thronged, and its hospitals filled with wounded soldiers. But before long the people withdrew farther from the Germans, for they knew that the Teutons were pressing forward in earnest.

As usual, the villagers marched in defense with the army against the Germans. It was evident, of course, that there were some who in the charge were killed on the spot.

At that time the above-mentioned two left Panavezis and went to Senuosiai, Svencionis, leaving behind them all their wealth and taking only what they could. They thought that the Germans would not advance that far. They found great numbers of refugees there, and, in fact they themselves, like others, were stopping with relatives there. While those who had no relatives were aided by a branch of the Lithuanian organization there.

Having remained at Svencionis about a month, it appeared that the Germans would not even give them peace there, for they were approaching gradually. It

was here that they learned that they could, beyond doubt, be conscripted. A friend told them to go to Ekaterinoslav, Ekaterinoslav province, saying that they could obtain work with a certain engineer there. They both proceeded to Ekaterinoslav, and on the way they witnessed many gruesome sights. Refugees were seen everywhere; at every station several wagons were drawn up to one side in which were refugees from Lithuania, Latvija and Poland. Even though the wagons were crowded as much as possible, still there was no room for all, and many were therofore compelled to stand.

Old men, young men, mothers and children, lived upon these overcrowded wagons, as the reporter says, so that there was not even standing room. The most serious thing was that they were unable to obtain food anywhere. The government, aside from furnishing shelter in the wagons, did not provide anything except hot water, "kipiatok." It is no wonder that disease and famine is prevalent among these needy and suffering refugees.

They did not feel at ease even in Ekaterinoslav, for they feared that they would be conscripted. This fear was increased when they saw the new recruits being transported to the front, and friends taking their last farewell. As they had previously planned, from there they went to Siberia and thence to America.

THROUGH SIBERIA, MANCHURIA, TO AMERICA

Along all the roads through Russia and Siberia all they saw were refugees and soldiers, soldiers and refugees, continuous streams. In Siberia matters are still worse—it is impossible to obtain food there even for money. They had to remain there two days without food.

After this great suffering they forced their way to Charbina; they still had to cross the border into Manchuria. Not knowing anyone there, they did not know where to seek aid. However, at such a psychological moment, a Jew is the proper person from whom one can get aid. They found a Jew who promised to direct them to a man who could get them over the "wall." They met this person, but he made such a great demand of money that they were almost forced to abandon their project. He demanded 500 rubles (\$250) from every person for getting him across the border.

They hesitated for some time, when they agreed with an American-born Swede to have him find them a man who would take them over the border. He made a cheap extortion—53 rubles apiece. In Manchuria they were confronted with another difficulty—they had to walk on foot, surrounded on all sides by Russian agents. They accordingly represented themselves as large traders in live stock, and worth millions, and they thus passed through Manchuria, inspecting cattle, and frequently passing the nights with these agents. However, representing themselves as wealthy men, they almost suffered murder at the hands of others. It is known that Manchurian murderers had decided to intercept and rob these "wealthy men." From that sad fate they were saved by the official head of the village, who sent with them an escort of eight soldiers, accompanied by an officer. With the aid of their "guardian angels" they happened to reach the bank of a river, from which, after enduring more suffering through misunderstanding, they proceeded to Japan. From there they sailed across the Atlantic to Victoria, Canada, and thence to Seattle, Wash. And it was October 24 when they arrived in Chicago.

Whenever they are asked to relate their story it re-

calls to them the suffering of their journey, for they grow sad when the details are brought up to them.

Only a Lithuanian could endure such suffering. Yet Mars has given to Lithuania more suffering than fate might otherwise decree.

What a necessity there is to help and aid Lithuania? Although, according to these refugees, the aid of the Americans is compared to a drop of water in the sea, yet they need aid, and this aid should be given. Don't forget your duty to suffering humanity!

Contributions for the Relief of the Lithuanian War Sufferers will be received at the following relief centres :

Rev. J. J. Kaulakis, 324 Wharton Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Rev. Joseph Sestokas, 568-570 Broome Street, New York City, N. Y.

Dr. A. K. Rutkauskas, 2302 South Leavitt Street, Chicago, Ill.

Rev. Thomas Zilinskis, 50 West Sixth Street, South Boston, Mass.

Mr. B. Vaisnora, 1514 Carson Street, S. S., Pittsburgh, Penna.

This relief work has been highly commended and endorsed by Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York; the Most Reverend George W. Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago, and by many other ecclesiastics of the Catholic Hierarchy.

