

Book Review

THE FOREST OF ANYKŠČIAI

*Viewing this wood the eye was appalled,
The heart and soul were gaily enthralled;
The mind, awakened, moved to surmise,
Is this a world or a Paradise?
Here all is beauty, all iresh and green,*

*All smells so sweet, and all is serene.
Each time you listen, rustling you hear,
In your heart feeling enchantment dear,
Soft mossy bedding thickly bespread,
Draws to its bosom the weary head.*

Thus wrote Antanas Baranauskas about the Forest of Anykščiai, a little nook of the beautiful and peaceful Lithuanian countryside.

Antanas Baranauskas, Bishop, poet, philologue, and mathematician, was born near Anykščiai in 1834. He composed this poem in the summer vacations of 1858—1859, while student at the Catholic Theological seminary at Varniai. It was his answer to a challenging statement made by one of his professors that the Lithuanian language was not fit for poetry or any other kind of expression of noble thought.

The Forest of Anykščiai is a lyric poem, written in a fluid, highly imaginative and emotional style. It is full of beautiful and unequalled descriptions of nature, and expressions of nostalgia. Its language is musical, warm, and simple, just like the people for whom it was written. It depicts Lithuanians' love of nature, and of freedom. At times it is joyous and triumphant, at times it is melancholy, like a Lithuanian folk song. The poem grew out of the tragic situation Lithuania was in when Baranauskas lived. Culturally it was being oppressed and assimilated by Poland; and politically and religiously — by Russia. Appearing at that time **The Forest of Anykščiai** might have helped to strengthen a pride in the people — a pride in their nationality, in their language, their culture.

This year marks the first appearance of an English translation of **The Forest of Anykščiai**, by N. Rastenis. No translation can ever surpass or even equal the original, because, inevitably, there will be expressions, nuances in every language which, translated, lose their effect. However, this work serves its purpose in that it acquaints our English speaking readers with at least a fragment of Lithuanian literature.

The Forest of Anykščiai, by Antanas Baranauskas (translated by N. Rastenis), published by Lithuanian Days, 41 pp.

D. A.