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THE NOTATIONS OF HENRICUS DE LETTIS IN THE MARGINS OF THE LIVONIAN CHRONICLE*

VIZMA BELŠEVICA

IT WAS THE YEAR 1212 OF THE LORD'S INCARNATION AND THE BISHOP'S 14th YEAR FOR THIS WITH THE PILGRIMS REJOICED THE WHOLE LIVONIAN CONGREGATION *	Long since, the water in truth's wells is bitter, Mixed with lies, it does not quench the thirst. Fruit plucked unripened from the tree of knowledge Has stripped the teeth. The mouth will go on hurting. Full brims the cup of disillusion and be- lated doubt. Rome like a jealous wife demands That love be sworn to her in public At every step... With spying eyes she reads Between my lines, that she owns not This heart, once so naive and yielding. The translator falls mute. And thoughtful grows the jester. And in dreams Courish boats sail down to Riga. I know — they won't arrive. And, if they do, In vain the blood. A scream above the walls. And in a grave of fire we shall go silent. And the clenched jaws will bitter ashen dust Become. Still the boats sail and sail. And women sing. *
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AND
 THE Our rivers turn arid.
 BISHOP Our menfolk are craven.
 SENT OUT Blush for shame, our little sons,
 TO ALL Your fathers blush no more.
 THE Our blood gushes out,
 LATGALIAN Eyes feed the ravens.
 AND Foreign standards fathers bear,
 LIVONIAN Serve in foreign legions.
 CASTLES Calm the birch's whiteness,
 AND Quick the axe's stroke.
 TO ALL Only — arm raised overhead —
 THE LANDS Foreigners, attend!
 WHICH Easily the tree is felled.
 BORDER Not the roots extracted.
 ON THE Our enmity is trickling water.
 RIVERS And your might — a rock.
 DAUGAVA
 AND
 GAUJA I want to burn. Give me the funeral pyre!
 AND Long was my life. But my life's waking —
 GATHERED short.
 A LARGE The highest of my father's sacraments —
 AND
 MIGHTY To climb toward heaven on a towering
 FORCE flame
 * And scream out the injustice by which
 my nation
 With fiery iron was beset and
 slaughtered.

 Is it injustice?

 *

BUT
 ALSO THE O, traitorous nation, is it worthwhile
 LIVONIANS To live for you, lay down my life for
 AND you?
 LATGALIANS O, cur-like nation! In place of bread
 BEING Your master dips in blood a roadside
 MORE pebble.
 RUTHLESS Gulp then your blood! And the stone gulp
 THAN with it!
 OTHER And wag your tail! You have earned it
 NATIONS well.
 LIKE O, servile nation! In sweet joy you
 THE tremble
 SERVANT Because the master whips your brothers
 OF THE Instead of you. Waiting, bare your teeth
 GOSPELS To fall upon a brother's bloodied nape,
 NOT For in the master's hand a medal glitters
 ENDOWED To be bestowed on you, when flesh with
 WITH iron scourged
 MERCY Stops twitching.
 ON THEIR And once again a green
 FELLOWMEN branch
 SLAUGHT- Will be severed from the verdure of your
 ERD vital force
 COUNTLESS O swordsman's jubilation!
 PEOPLE He can

KILLING
ALSO
SOME
WOMEN
AND
CHILDREN
AND
DID NOT
WISH
TO SPARE
ANYONE
ON THE
PLAIN
AND
IN THE
VILLAGES
*

With your assistance forge the axe for
you.
When your obliging face grows too re-
volting,
Where is that Judas tree
in which to hang
myself,
Your, slavish nation, most abject slave,
Owned by the crusaders with sword and
verse.

.....
*

...AND
TO THE
BISHOP
AKO'S
HEAD
AS
A TOKEN
PRESENTED
OF
VICTORY
AND FULL
OF JOY
HE
PRAISED
GOD
*

.....
Feet in heavy honey steeping
goes my master's horse.
Yet this night in honey scarlet
father's head will soak.
In my master's sword the silver
glitters and the gold,
Brightly, brightly will it flash
above my mother's breast
And my master's riding cloak —
pure and silken snow.
How down in the darkening orchard
shall my sister scream...
Goading steed, into the smooth flanks
now the sharp spur dieings.
Acrid in my master's footsteps
charing coals will linger.
In a parchment roll remain
will the servant's writing,
That the Lord of Sabaoth
was in His mercy by us,
And Our Lady Mary also —
flower of innocence.
Oh how in the darkened orchard now my
sister screams!

.....
*

AND
AFTER
THIS
FASHION
THE
INTRACT-
ABLE
AND
TO
PAGAN
MATTERS
MUCH
DEVOTED
NATION
WAS

.....
I write, and from the words blood does
not drip,
And the barbed bitterness of letters does
not gash the page.
You, Jesus Christ, over my shoulder read
How Godfearingly for your fame I lie.
O Christ, your kingdom shall come over
us,
One god and tongue. And nation also one.
I see the Latvian land with crossnails
hammered
To the surface of your holy meekness.
Now what, you gentle one, our mourn-
ful songs,

LED
 BY THE
 VOICE
 OF CHRIST
 STEP
 UPON
 STEP
 UNTO THE
 YOKE OF
 THE LORD
 AND
 ABANDON-
 ING
 THEIR
 DARKNESS
 THEY
 GAZED
 FAITH-
 FULLY
 UPON THE
 TRUE
 LIGHT
 WHICH
 IS
 CHRIST
 *

What harm do midsummer's wild blos-
 soms do you?
 But not of flowers — of thorns the bloody
 crown
 About the head should be... With pike-
 points must be ploughed
 The vineyard of the Lord across our
 bones
 And brains. Not a trace left, or thought.
 And our destruction — one more sunset
 That in unerring concept Rome may
 dawn
 Over the earth...

Oh, let your faithful servant
 Still endure it. I greatly fear
 That I shall rise against you, Christ.
 From the dissembling cross ripped,
 naked,
 Beneath your slave's feet into dust you'll
 crumble.

BY
 MY BEST
 KNOWLEDGE
 AND
 CON-
 SCIENCE
 I HAVE
 SAID
 NAUGHT
 BUT
 THE TRUTH
 TO
 ANYONE'S
 CREDIT
 TO
 ANYONE'S
 CENSURE

From dwellings blasted by the ashen
 winds
 They'll come one day and ask me: why
 At heaven and your nation do you rage?
 Do we lack desolation, that our shame
 Should still be sown abroad? Are we not
 mocked
 Enough without you? And I will answer.

 Scream, my nation! Writhe! Into your
 wounds
 I will pour salt, that you may forget
 Nothing. Grow in that painful hatred
 which is holier
 Than tenderest forgiving. I die
 With you, that you may be reborn. You
 shall
 Hoard death, calamity, disgrace and
 shame!
 And weep! Your tears will turn to steel
 When the time comes. And evil will be
 visited
 By iron rain. My hand is feeble
 And cannot exact for injuries.
 But words — they are a sword held
 double-edged
 Above their castles and above your
 homes.

*The first passage quoted from the Livonian Chronicle should be read first, the subsequent passages at points indicated in the body of the poem by asterisks, leaving the last quoted passage to complete the poem.

