

Antanas Baranauskas

Baranauskas, Antanas (1831—1902), Roman Catholic bishop, poet, philologist and mathematician, born on Jan. 11, 1831 in Anykščiai. He attended a school for clerks in the Rumšiškės district in 1851—53. Upon graduation he was required to serve in the civil service as a clerk, and from 1853—56 he served in Kaunas, Raseiniai, Seda, and Skuodas. In 1856 he was accepted by the Theological Seminary at Varniai. There his idealism and his poetic talent were fostered by a friendship with two seminarians, K. Kairys and P. Viksva. They strengthened and fostered each other's determination to serve their Church and their country. An atmosphere of this kind was prevalent in the seminary during the time of Bishop Motiejus Valančius. After graduating from the Seminary in 1858, Baranauskas was sent to the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg, from which he graduated in 1862. Then he received permission from the Russian government to continue his studies in Munich. He also visited the Universities of Innsbruck (Austria), Rome, and Louvain (Belgium). He studied in Western Europe until the fall of 1864. Upon his return he was appointed professor at the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg. But in the following year Bishop Valančius, who had lost more than 100 priests during the insurrection of 1863 against the Russians,

recalled him to Kaunas. Here he was professor of homiletics, dogma, and Lithuanian language in the Theological Seminary from 1867—84. In 1884 he was appointed auxiliary bishop of Samogitia, and in 1897 bishop of Seinai, where he died.

Baranauskas possessed a complex and many-sided personality, and some of his activities have been variously evaluated. Throughout his life he fostered his leaning towards asceticism with deliberate exercises. On the other hand he had an intensely emotional trait, which led him to immerse himself completely into whatever subject currently interested him. From 1854—63 he devoted himself to his first passion, poetry, and came under the religious, moral, and patriotic influence of the popular movement initiated by Valančius and Daukantas. While abroad, he became interested in philology, and this interest deepened during his work at the Theological Seminary in Kaunas. He studied Lithuanian dialects, prepared a grammar of the Lithuanian language, and worked to establish a standard written language. He corresponded on linguistic questions with the leading German and Russian philologists of the time, including A. Schleicher, H. Weber, P. Grott, J. Baudouin de Courtenay, A. Aleksandrov, and others. He helped the Russian Academy of Arts and Sciences to prepare an edition of *Metai* (The Seasons) by Donelaitis, and reviewed works of philology. He was recognized as an authority on the Lithuanian language and the first Lithuanian philologist of any importance. Kazimieras Jaunius was his pupil. His work on Lithuanian dialects was published after his death by F. Specht (*Litauische Mundarten, gesammelt von A. Baranowski*. Band 1, 1920).

After he became auxiliary bishop in 1884, he devoted himself to mathematics, in which he had shown promise in his youth. In this branch of his activity he kept closely in touch with A. Dambrauskas-Jakštas, who also was a poet

and a mathematician. Every day he devoted 13 or more hours to mathematics, sometimes studying through the night. But soon he had to admit: "My bent for mathematics became a passion and took me away from my duties." A part of his mathematical researches was published in the *Zeitschrift für Mathematic und Physik* in 1890, another part appeared in the works of the Cracow Academy of Sciences (XXVIII), and a part was published by the author himself in *O progresji transcedentalnej*, 1897. The rest of his work was not published, as it was found that some of the theorems which he had discovered were already well known. This had come about because Baranauskas was a self-taught mathematician.

After he became bishop of Seinai, Baranauskas showed a new facet of his character in his dealings with the tsarist government. Seinai had not had a bishop since 1893. According to the existing laws the tsar's government used to nominate candidates for the post of bishop, and the pope would choose and endorse one of them. The Russian government delayed nominating a bishop acceptable to the pope. Finally in 1897 they nominated Baranauskas, whom they considered harmless politically because of his preoccupation with his studies. But Baranauskas proved to be different from the day he was to be sworn in. He swore first the oath to the pope and then the oath to the tsar, breaking a tradition and causing the representative of the tsar to leave the ceremony in protest. His short term as bishop (1897—1902) brought a continuous series of surprises to the Russian administration. During their visits Russian officials were amazed at the bishop's erudition and his phenomenal memory, when he quoted lengthy sections of Russian classical poetry. They were equally taken aback by his determined opposition when the interests of the Church clashed with those of the tsar. As bishop he liked to

emphasize the triumphant character of the Church. For example, during official visits to his parishes, he liked to be met outside each town by the faithful with the utmost ceremony. The governor general of Warsaw tried to stop these ceremonies by leveling fines against the parish priests. Then Baranauskas paid the fines himself and brought suit against the governor general in the Senate. The suit was won after his death. The bishop surprised the Lithuanians as well by proclaiming loyalty to the Polish-Lithuanian union and denouncing the Lithuanian national movement as separatism. Lithuanian patriots considered him old-fashioned and even a renegade. At the same time he amazed the Lithuanians by dropping his mathematical studies and writing hymns in Lithuanian. These became very popular. In 1901 he started to translate the Bible into Lithuanian, working 12 hours each day. He collapsed from overwork and was found dead at his desk in the middle of a sentence on Nov. 26, 1902.

Of all his numerous activities, his poetry remains as his most permanent and significant work. Part of his poetry consists of folk-type songs: *Dainų dainelė* (The Song of Songs), in 24 strophes, 1857; *Kelionė Petaburkan* (A Journey to St. Petersburg), consisting of 14 songs in which he describes his experiences while leaving his native land in 1858 for the Academy in St. Petersburg; and *Neramumas* (Anxiety), written in Munich in 1863, concerning the uneasiness he felt during the insurrection against the Russians. These songs were not published until later, but they spread at once by word of mouth. One of the songs from *Kelionė Petaburkan* became for a long time the hymn of resistance against the Russians, expressing the height of national determination in the phrase: „Kad tu, gude, nesulauktum, nebus, kaip tu nori“ (May your wish never be fulfilled, Russian! It shall not be as you desire).

During the same period, in 1858—59 he wrote the poem *Anykščių šilelis* (The Forest of Anykščiai), modeled after the forest scenes of *Pan Tadeusz* by A. Mickiewicz. The poem is only 342 lines long, but it is the high point of the literary work of Baranauskas. With poetic enthusiasm he describes the forest of his native district, using pictorial and acoustic images and expressing his subjective response both to natural beauty and to the mystic union of the Lithuanian inhabitant with his forest. The second part of the poem tells the history of the forest. The first section of this history is an account of the beauty of the forest, of the former freedom of Lithuanians and their intimate familiarity with their forest. The second section relates how the tsarist regime seized the country, restricted the freedom of the inhabitants to enjoy the gifts of the forest, sold parts of it by trickery and felled the trees, until there was nothing left but „*kalnai kelmuoti, pakalnės nuplikę*“ (hills with tree-stumps, and bare slopes). In the structure of the poem, as in a symphony, the opening note is one of lament for the present condition of the plundered forest. Then the mood grows lighter and more cheerful, with recollection of the former condition of the forest, until the height of ecstasy is attained with description of the forest-sounds. Finally the somber mood returns with the history of the destruction of the forest and the poem ends abruptly with the recognition that the former glory has been lost. A short finale gives the poem a generalized and symbolic significance, as the destiny of the forest is linked to that of Lithuania and of the poet: „*Toj pat galybė, ką mišką sugraužė, širdį, dūšią užgriuvo ir giesmę nulaužė*“ (The same power, which destroyed the forest, attacked the heart and the soul and broke off my song).

Anykščių šilelis was published in almanacs of 1860—61 by L. Ivinskis. The manuscript had been sent for philological studies to A. Schleicher, from whom it passed into the

hands of H. Weber. L. Geitler, a German who visited Lithuania in 1873, printed the poem in his *Litauische Studien*, 1875. H. Weber republished the poem in *Ostlitauische Texte*, 1882, with additions which had been omitted by Geitler and which Weber had received from Baranauskas. At first the Russian government forbade distribution of Weber's publication, but through the intervention of the academician P. Grott permission was granted. S. Jablonskienė translated the poem into Polish in 1909. N. Tichonov translated it into Russian in 1950, N. Ras-tenis into English in 1956, P. Kalva into Latvian in 1960, and H. Buddensieg into German in 1967.

The remaining poetry of Baranauskas was not as popular. It consisted of didactic and quasi-historical writings. To assist the temperance movement started by Bishop Valančius, Baranauskas prepared the poem *Dievo rykštė ir malonė* (God's Scourge and Grace), where the scourge was alcohol and temperance was grace. At the same time in 1859 he wrote *Pasikalbėjimas giesmininko su Lietuva* (A Dialogue between a Poet and Lithuania). The poem has little poetic value, but illustrates the author's view of history, a view which appears in part in *Anykščių šilėlis* and other works. The poet asks Lithuania why she is sad and weeps. She answers, "I am oppressed by strangers from all sides and they wish for the death of my children," while these same children do not listen to Lithuania's teachings, refuse to speak their native language and dress in the German manner. Lithuania rejects the poet's suggestion to revive the past by songs, whereby heroes would cleanse the country from the influence of the Slavs and the Germans. She refuses his other suggestion that he should bring "the sciences of all the world" to the Lithuanians and raise his fellow countrymen to a place among the first in science and economy, so that they would enjoy material prosperity,

bring up their children in freedom and become an example to other nations. From the words put into the mouth of Lithuania the reader can deduce the views of Baranauskas about the destiny of Lithuania and of nations in general. He knew that the distant past could not be revived and the nation must continue to grow organically, but he also realized that Western education and the progress of civilization had turned aside from religion and were leading into false paths. So he warned both against escape into a romanticized past and against the growth of atheistic positivism. As if he could find no solution between these two currents, Baranauskas would have liked to enclose the Lithuanians in a shell, which would have protected them from both influences, and to raise their moral standard through the support of religion. In this poem, as in all his other work, Baranauskas proved to be an effective opponent but unable to lead in a positive direction.

These two currents, patriotic romanticism and patriotic positivism, were already spreading in Lithuania. Their adherents saw and used those items in Baranauskas' work and writings which suited them. They recognized and adopted his resistance to foreign occupation and foreign influences. They recognized his enthusiasm for scientific studies. Above all, they recognized the value of his poetry, taking pride in it and drawing inspiration from it.