Rainis’ **“Castagnola”** (*„Kastaņola”*) (1928)

Rainis’ book of memories “Castagnola” is an intimate, emotionally vivid narrative of the years he and Aspazija spend in Switzerland; it’s both — a poet-exile’s gratitude to a land and people who gave him a safe political refuge and also a second homeland — a place of spiritual growth and renewal. The work was written in the August of 1927, when Rainis together with the artist Alberts Prande went to Castagnola to work on a book of memories and prepare illustrations for it. The book was written in a very short span of three weeks. That is why it isn’t a very uniform biographic work, but rather is the picturesque impressions that were reawakened by meeting Castagnola. They are complemented with descriptions of notable places in Lugano. To connect the stylistically diverse chapters the poet used poems and Ticinese folksongs. Some chapters written by Aspazija are included in the book as well. Rainis’ gave “Castagnola” a subtitle — “In the Footsteps of Memories in the Second Homeland” („Pa atmiņu pēdām otrā dzimtenē”) and added a tribute — “This book belongs to Aspazija as a small remembrance of the life we spent together”. To add the work some volume, in the book about Castagnola, Rainis also included the travel record “To the Blue Coast” (*„Uz Zilo krastu”*) that tells about his vacation trip to Menton at the French Rivera. This was written earlier — in 1926. However Castagnola still shines over the whole work, the memories are dominated by brightness and lightness that no kind of trouble is able to dispel.

“Whenever I think of you, my beauty,

My hearth is aching, but my eyes are laughing,

I see you all aglow, radiant and shining.”

/Translated by I. Lešinska and V. Matiss/

“Castagnola” was published by the publishing house “Anša Gulbja izdevniecība” in 1928. In 2011 the publishing house “Atēna” printed this work of bibliography, and cultural and historical heritage as a precise and scientifically edited volume by Gundega Grīnuma including her commentaries. The book has been translated in Russian. Translations in English, French, German and Italian were also published to celebrate the 150 year anniversary.