

# ***Bessarabian Agriculture—Summer***

Translated by Ellen Hardy-Birt,

with special assistance given by Dr. Elvire Necker-Eberhardt for the poetry.

Translated from the book, *Wie's Daheim War—Der Schicksalsweg der Bessarabiendeutschen*,  
by J. Becker, published 1950.

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## **The Pastures**

In spring the meadows look like green carpets stretching along a brook which meanders very slowly through the valley. The sun burns hotter and hotter down on them. The flowers that adorned are gone. The grass is green and luscious in rainy years. In dry summers the green carpet is transformed into a red one. The foot lightly touches the meagre grass with a silent rustle. However, looking far ahead one can see various herds grazing. Every farmer owns a small flock of sheep. He has no time to guard them himself. As a result, he hires a shepherd from the shepherd's master ("Schäferschulzen")<sup>1</sup>. They are mostly Moldauer ("Moldawaner"). They are known to be the best shepherds.

The shepherd stands by his grazing flock with his cloak hung around him, the elongated skin hat on his head and "Papuschen" on his feet, leaning on his shepherds-crook. We can see that the sheep have been shorn, which indicates that the shearing of the sheep is over. There are a large number of little lambs in the flock. They are hopping and jumping. The ewes ("Schafmütter") are watching them contentedly. Again and again they come to be suckled. It is midday and the shepherd drives them to the river, the well or spring (Steppenbrunnen) to let them drink. During lunchtime, the sun sends down ever-hotter rays. The sheep huddle closely together with their heads hanging down. It is too hot for them or the flies, called 'midges' ("Mucken"), torment them too much. The shepherd has to drive them apart again and again so that they don't become ill in this heat. In the afternoon, when it is no longer too hot, they resume grazing. The little lambs are playing again. Not far away from the flock of sheep are the herds of cattle and horses. They also are standing in the midday heat. Evening is falling and the shepherds bring their herds back to the village.

Each animal knows its farm. Only the small lambs and calves do not yet know where they belong. However, the farmers in the farm to which they have come will lock them in. The small boys and girls got the instruction from their parents to look for 'the lost sheep' and to take them home. They go from farm to farm—as far as the 'sheep run' reaches—and look for them in the sheep pens. Only late in the evening have they accomplished their task. As time goes by, the young animals get used to finding their respective farms in the evening.

The cattle census of 1930 is very interesting. The results for the villages Tarutino and Albota are given below (Pampuch, page 29):

*Live-stock in Tarutino:*

1827	358 horses	2141 cattle	1020 sheep
1908	580 horses	1424 cattle	2260 sheep
1913	789 horses	1708 cattle	2916 sheep
1925	324 horses	964 cattle	4220 sheep
1934	313 horses	1101 cattle	2411 sheep

*Live-stock in Albota:*

1892	217 horses	677 horned cattle	- sheep
1911	191 horses	626 horned cattle	- sheep
1913	244 horses	853 horned cattle	- sheep
1920	162 horses	604 horned cattle	- sheep
1939	347 horses	688 horned cattle	1777 sheep

The children's task is also to tend the geese in the meadows. In the morning the goslings are taken in a basket. The young boy or girl carries it ahead. The mother geese follow proudly, with their heads high. Once at the meadow, the goslings are let out. There a tray with feed and another with water are left for them.

When they have eaten, they graze. In a few days they are already used to it and there is no need to carry extra feed for them. The boys and girls though, who get together, play the whole day during their work, tending the geese. During these days, for example, cooking stoves are being dug out. A fire is lit in them. Potatoes are cooked in the glowing fire. They like these potatoes better than those cooked by their mothers. Moreover, they play the various children's games. Again and again they have to interrupt their play as the mother geese are taken away by Wanderlust. The children quite often have trouble trying to keep them there. How many adults remember with fondness these carefree days full of joy and child's play! How they would love to experience them again.

## Harvest time

"What is more beautiful than the grain crop,  
when the stalks, the slender ones,  
slowly sway.  
And each stalk holds another."

A poet is thus writing about the beauty of a field full of grain stalks when summer nears its zenith. The golden ears of the wheat, barley and oats are characteristic of the farmer's land. The year is good. The weather was favourable. The grains stand in tall spikes. The ears of corn bend. The grains are golden yellow and hard. The farmer picks a few ears and rubs them on the flat of his hand. He blows onto it. The grains stay behind. He inspects them carefully. This year they developed well; they are not straggly—they are all full of thick grain. They will have a good weight. The leaves on the stalks are dried up. The farmer thankfully looks over his land, his 'holding.'

In his innermost thoughts, he thanks God for such a good and plentiful blessing. He, who depends totally on nature, is better connected with God than the townspeople. Our forebears and parents were all very religious. The thanks and the honour belongs to God alone!

The farmer glances again and again towards the heavens, which send down rain and sunshine over the fields, plus fortune and misfortune for the people. His heart has a special feeling for his land. The bright day, the beautiful fields with their rich harvest do him good and make his heart joyful.

In the next few days he is going to start harvest. His "harvester" or mowing machine is repaired and ready. The blades are sharpened. The next morning the whole family drives out to the field. On the way, many a beautiful German folk song resounds. Suddenly, the cart stops. They are at their destination. Soon after, the horses are harnessed to the mower. The father sits on the cart seat and steers the horses. Either the strongest son or the farm hand sits behind him and pushes the cut wheat towards the back. As soon as the platform is full, he tosses the stalks downwards. Following behind come some of his people, who stack the crop at set intervals. When mowing is finished, the stacking is also soon done. Where the mown crop was thrown down from the machine, everything needs to be raked together. When everybody arrives at the cart, they enjoy a hearty meal. Everybody eats and drinks. It tastes wonderful!

All get up happy and content. They prepare everything for the next journey to another 'holding.' Everybody chats joyfully during the drive. Some anecdotes are told. Greetings and laughter are exchanged with people who drive past them.

Harvest time is the most beautiful time for the farmer. He reaps the fruit of his labour. Through life's hardship and the day's hard work he achieves his ambitions. This is how a Bessarabian farmer lives.

## Moon Night

By J. v. Eichendorff

It was as if heaven  
had quietly kissed the earth,  
so that she would now dream of it  
glimmering in blossoms.

The air went through the fields,  
The ears were gently waving,  
The forests quietly rustled,  
The night was so starry.  
And my soul spread  
widely out her wings,  
Flew through the silent countryside

As if she flew home.

## Threshing

Work is the ornament of a citizen

Blessing is the prize of effort,

If dignity honours the king,

We are honoured by our hands' work

(Schiller)

Harvest time is over. Now starts the difficult time of threshing. In the backyard is an open area, round and a little higher than the surroundings. During summer, this place has dried out completely under the hot summer rays. The ground shows cracks. It needs to be hard for threshing though, hard as glass. With one or two barrels on his cart the farmer drives down to the river and fills them with water. It is brought to the threshing place and poured onto it. Then the farmer gets the chaff, spreads it out evenly and rolls it with the threshing stone. So that it is even, it must be rolled afterwards with the round stone. It is now as hard as glass and is covered with straw so that it is not so exposed to the sun. Consequently, it cannot dry out.

The cart is now enlarged. The distance between the front and back wheels is much lengthened by inserting a long 'extension'. The big ladders are erected on top. The next morning they start work very early. Long before dawn, the cart is harnessed and the farmer drives off to pick up the harvest. This procedure is repeated once or twice during the day. As the crop is not bound into sheaves, it is easier for the farmer to load up. As a result, he also loads up on top of the ladders and stacks the harvest skilfully into a huge cartload. Once he's finished loading, he drives back home.

On returning to the threshing place, he stops and unharnesses the horses. The cart is unloaded. All members of the family, who are able to work, do so. They carry the crop and distribute it evenly over the threshing place. The empty cart is pushed aside and the horses harnessed to the threshing stone. Father takes the very long reins in his hand and stands in the middle of the threshing area. From there he lets the horses slowly walk around him in a circle. Every so often he changes his place so that all the harvest lying in the threshing area can be rolled over by the stone roller. After repeated rolling, the crop is turned, so that what is lying underneath comes to the top. While the farmer is busy 'driving,' the others are free. They lay in the shade and tell each other funny stories of ghosts, magic and other things. Every so often they get a jug of wine to quench their huge thirst. For a change, they quite often also get a sugar or water melon from the cellar and eat them. These taste very delicious in the heat and quench the thirst very quickly.

The straw is forked from the threshing place and the rest is then raked off. It is taken to the place where the straw rick is to be built. When a few cartfuls ('*Harbiewagen*') have been threshed, the grains left behind and the chaff are pushed together. It makes a beautiful big heap right in the middle of the square. When everything has been swept together, the grain cleaning machine is set up. The cleaning starts.

One person turns the wheel, another loads, and the third shovels the grain and the fourth shovels the chaff away. The grains are thus separated from the chaff, put into sacks and taken into the loft. The chaff is taken to the chaff barn (also known as *Spreuhütte*, *Gsothütte* or *Kaffhaus*). The work is repeated daily until the farmer has finished threshing.

When the last cart is brought in, a nice custom was followed. One sheaf is put onto a fork, which sticks out far beyond the corn cart. This was a sign that a farmer was finished—'*Sichelhengete*.'

Infinite blessing is streaming in  
the granary is filling up with precious wealth,  
The rooms are increasing, the house is expanding. (Schiller)

**Translator's Notes:**

I A "Schaefer Schulzen" was a person (usually elected) from the village responsible for matters relating to the sheep.

# ***Bessarabian Agriculture—Autumn***

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Necker-Eberhard for several specific words in this article.*

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## **Vine-growing and Vintage**

Already during the first few years of settlement vine-growing prospered. They used the precious old species, which yielded a superb wine. Every village had a wine tavern, called a "Schänke" (Inn). The old folks told many stories about these "Inns." Many Rubels were spent there on drink, but many good times happened there as well. In the course of time, these wine taverns closed. Between 1899-1907 the most beautiful and most successful vineyards were destroyed by the vine-louse, phylloxera. Vintages were getting scarcer and scarcer. The price of wine shot up quickly and reached enormous levels. Many farmers had no wine at all. By good chance it happened that by that time the wild American vines arrived in the land, the 'Saiber' and the 'Taras.' Many breathed easily again as they now had their 'grape-juice,' which would save them from drying out completely. It was only after the First World War that these vines became naturalised. After a few years they were grafted with the French vines.

The year of 1929 had a bitterly cold winter, which caused very heavy damage in the vineyards.

After the vineyards were hoed four to five times during summer, autumn arrived and the time for the grape harvest. Everybody looks forward to it, especially the children, who look forward to the sweet wine!

The grape stands are put onto the wagon. Everybody able to walk must help. Every one receives a grape knife to be able to cut the clusters. Everyone has a bucket or tub standing next to them. When full it is emptied into the grape basket. The strongest must carry the basket to the wagon and tip the grapes into the vats. One of the vats also contains the grape pestle, which is used to pulp the grapes so it can take more grapes. The children particularly enjoy the cutting of the grapes. They can eat as many as they are able. "The good ones in the crop, the bad ones in the pot." In this case into the bucket. When they are grapes growing on an original vine plant (a), the children soon get a completely blue mouth. At the grape harvest—known here as cutting the grapes—various jokes and stories are told. Everywhere the laughter of boys and girls can be heard. The most beautiful folk songs resound. For example 'Uf em Wasa graset d'Hasa'—'Kein schöner Land' and more.

Evening falls. Throughout the whole valley you can hear the happy laughter and singing. Close by the village many grape wagons gather. A friendly and hearty welcome is exchanged by waving or nodding to each other.

Back at home, the grapes are then crushed with the grape mill. Soon the most delicious sweet wine can be tasted. Sometimes the wine ferments on the husks of grapes or it is immediately drained. The last produces the so-called 'Schiller'.

Pressing of the husks of grapes is very hard work, a work that is mostly done during the night so that one gets enough room in the vat. Almost everybody owns a vineyard. Many harvest 5000-6000 litres

and more. This is a very good source of revenue. They are continually trying to improve the quality of the wine and also to increase quantity.

The farmer doesn't neglect to prepare some wine for himself, a barrel for winter and another for summer. Many become rather loquacious and affable through the use of their loveable grape juice. And many remember the saying:

Oh, you lovely grape juice,

How do you make my limbs stronger!

Where the dirt is deepest,

That's where you fling me most often.

The Corn

A thousand busy hands stir,

Help each other in a lively group,

And in fiery motion

All forces are known. (Schiller)

The planting of the corn has already been reported on. What a wonderful picture we get of hoeing the cornfield. Men, women, boys and girls are scattered all over the field as they hoe. The men and boys have their straw hats on their heads; the hatband is often threadbare or totally missing. The older women are usually wearing dark, and the girls, light or coloured scarves as head covering. From afar this looks almost like a field of flowers. Already in the early morning the heat is noticeable. As it gets even hotter at midday, everybody stands around barefoot. Sleeves and trouser legs are usually turned up. The younger ones even get rid of their shirts and work only in their shorts. Entirely tanned, able to offer resistance to the heat, they stand in their row and hoe in order to be the first to reach the end. The one to reach it first can rest until the others have caught up. The small, tender corn stalks may not stand too close together. Between the rows is ploughed with the *Welschkorn*-plough. A horse draws it. The father is mainly the one to control the *Welschkorn*-plough. A little boy sits on the horse and guides it. He may do that this year for the first time. He is very proud about it. That means for him that he is no longer the smallest. It gives him a lot of self-assurance. With his head raised high, he rides past the hoeers. On this occasion he also learns two new expressions '*Huescht*' and '*Hott*' (i.e. "on the left" and "on the right"). He must absolutely know this, so that he always remains in the centre between two rows. Otherwise the small corn stalks will be ploughed under. After the corn is hoed twice, it needs to be staked, so that the large stalk, at which 1-2 corns have set, cannot be pulled out by a possible storm. The row is repeatedly ploughed deep with the '*Welschkorn*-plough.' The pillar of the plough-blade is now taped with rags, so that even more earth is thrown onto the stalks.

These times are often unforgettable for the large and small children. During the long winter evenings one still tells this or that story about the hoeing of the corn.

The sun becomes hotter from day to day. The corn leaves and stalks change colour, becoming yellow and dry. The leaves, which cover the corn, are darker coloured. Initially the corn kernels are soft and milky, but now they get a more yellow colour and become perfectly hard. The corn is ripe.

As long as the kernels are milky, the children find great pleasure in knowing that they can cook or roast the cobs. The cobs then taste much better. That is a particularly fine delicacy for them. In addition, the small children also play gladly "Hutscherles" ('Hutsch' meaning "small foal"). They pull down the leaves of the cobs, but don't tear them right off. They use a cord, which is usually twisted and made from the corn leaves, to pull the horses around on the yard or the road. They also make sure that they have 'speckled,' red or yellow corn horses. When they finish their play, they bring their horses into their stable built from cobs.

When the corn is perfectly ripe, the next step is the corn harvest. More boards are fixed to the 'box wagon.' One bag is carried for each person riding along.

Once at the field everyone ties their bag together, so that they can hang it over the right shoulder. The bag opening stays on the chest. The left hand holds the opening open, while the right hand breaks off the cobs from the stalks and puts them into the bag. As soon as the bag is full, it is emptied. All pickers empty their bag in the same place.

One of them is assigned to chop off the stalks of some rows. He must put the chopped-off stalks into heaps, so that later another can drive through with the wagon, in order to load the broken corn.

Evening comes. The horses are harnessed; driving from corn heap to corn heap and the corn is loaded. The box of the wagon is full. Now the boards are placed on the side of the cart's box. When these also are filled, one or two rows of cobs are then stuck in. Thus one gets still more on it. Now all the bags are filled and put on top. Because each farmer had planted many hectares, the corn harvest takes several days, even weeks.

The corn brought home is unloaded into a barn. Frequently, two, three, four or more cartloads are brought home in a day. Then the most pleasant time of the corn harvest comes: stripping the cobs.

### Other Autumn Work

Also at this time, the potato harvest is due. Generally few spuds were cultivated because we do not know it as a main staple food. It has also found little use as fodder. For most fodder, corn is used. Nevertheless, it was a pleasure for the children to be allowed to gather potatoes. It was fun to see one bag after another being filled. On leaving for home, they were allowed to sit on the full bags. The potatoes were kept in the cellar over winter. They were only rarely stored in clamps or stacks.

A more pleasant work was the fruit harvest. Apples, pears, plums, peaches, apricots, etc. would be picked. In the German colonies there was less fruit grown; it was more common in the villages of the foreigner in the proximity of the Dnjester River. The nut harvest sometimes brought beautiful yields. The boys enjoyed a greater pleasure in the knocking down or 'stufeln' of the nuts. When the people were finished, on Sunday afternoon the small boys carried long sticks to get down the nuts remaining on the trees. In the evening they came home and had possibly collected or knocked down a few hundred. The nut trees were to be found almost exclusively in the vineyards. Frequently the Sunday trousers

were torn. The boy came home with a long tear in them. Although he sought to conceal it, it was noticeable nevertheless, because his mother, after brushing them thoroughly, had to put them into the wardrobe. He had to endure a thrashing. Despite that, nothing could take away the joy. Was there anything else more joyful?

In addition, the last watermelons and melons were collected. Mother had waited long for this. She wants to preserve them. Some days ago she was also in the "Kraeutergarten" (grocers) and bought tomatoes, paprika, cucumbers, cabbage, etc. in order to 'preserve' the melons. She must also have pickles for the winter.

She has already prepared "Gsäls" (pickled food in salt brine). In addition, she also bought several glasses of bee's honey.

The farmer, however, does not allow himself to stop. The corn stalks are still outside. These must still be brought back home. For this he again makes his carts 'big' and brings them home one load after the other. The corn stalks, however, are not stored in a large, long rick, but are formed into round cone-shaped heaps at the threshing place. This is so that the farmer can access smaller stacks more easily to get the fodder. The corn stalks and corn leaves serve the cattle as fodder. The cattle eat the leaves; the remaining stalks serve as fuel material.

Still the farmer cannot rest. He must hurry, so that he can still sow the autumn seed. 'Who does not sow, they also cannot harvest.' Again he scatters the seed, ploughs and harrows it. Again he puts his whole hope in God, the Almighty, and asks for favourable weather.

How pleased he is when he later stands in a field and can look over the germinating, greening winter wheat on his fields.

On the fields and pastures grow steppe grasses, mugwort, stone clover, sweet peas, goat's beard, flake flower, thistle, clover, sage, orach, plantago (rat's tail), thornapple, mallow, speedwell, field scabious, daisies, to name just a few.

Over the brooks and pools grow reed, rush, hard grasses, which form wild thickets.

Isolated acacias grow along the roads and drinking places. They are cultivated in the villages and are planted extensively so that they are to be regarded as Bessarabia's character tree. Therefore, Bessarabia is often sung of as the "country of the acacia."

Arrangement of the country in the year 1930 <sup>1)</sup> in Bessarabia:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Hectare (ha)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Cereals/Wheat	2,532,634	72.10
Fodder cultivation	64,812	1.84
Vegetables	83,811	2.39
Industrial plants	218,681	6.23
Fallow	16,003	0.46

Natural meadows	38,988	1.11
Pastures	40,321	11.65
Fruit gardens	41,269	1.17
Vineyards	106,976	3.05
Total	3,512,495	100.00

The most important harvest results for the year 1930 <sup>(1)</sup>

<b>Crop</b>	<b>Total harvest in dz<sup>2)</sup></b>	<b>Cultivated area in ha<sup>3)</sup></b>	<b>Yield per 1 ha</b>
Wheat	5,970,732	602,918	9.9
Rye	1,466,030	133,272	11.0
Barley	8,269,349	787,887	10.4
Oats	1,142,115	129,945	8.7
Corn	7,554,744	870,197	8.6
Potatoes	2,182,257	35,078	62.2
Sugar beets	1,234,833	6,652	185.6
Melons	952,557	9,567	99.5
Pumpkins	1,007,387	88,767	11.3
Sunflower kernels	1,288,372	154,972	8.3
Wine	2,580,556 hl <sup>4)</sup>	93,759	27.5 hl

In the meantime the steppes became grey. All splendour, all life dies away. It remains completely empty. One can look for miles and see no humans. No animals move about the fields.

The storks, swallows, larks and other migratory birds have left the country. Everything is deserted and empty. Nature seems to die. As in nature, so it is in the life of humans. A large, uncanny isolation surrounds it. The Bessarabian German poetess Ilse Mayer sings of the autumn as follows:

The wide steppes are lying bare,  
which still recently saw so many industrious hands,  
where the larks rejoicing warble rang out,  
there the birds now leave on their migrations.  
The summer's step lies still in a golden light,  
like a child tired of playing,  
on deserted steppe country quietly gone to rest,  
when still the bird's last songs sounded,  
and bidding farewell the steppe looks after,  
the quiet and serene last summer day.  
Drops fall... or are they tears,  
which feel full of misgivings the autumn proximity?

The soils, barns, corn houses and cellars are full of the richest goods; the benediction of God was large and rich. To Him belongs the thanks, praise and honour into all eternity!

"Yes, now all thank God with your hearts, mouth, and hands!"

**Original Footnote:**

1) Handwoerterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums S. 392/393 (Heimkehr der Bessarabiendeutschen von Pampuch)

**Translator's notes:**

(a) In most Bessarabian vines, better kinds of grapes were grafted on. For some reason, this results in the plants not being attacked by the "Reblaus," a pest. If nothing was grafted on a vine plant then they were "Direkttraeger," i.e. the grapes that grew on the original (usually wild) plant.

2) Dz = Doppelzentner; 1 Zentner = 100 lbs. or 50 kgs; 1 Doppelzentner = 200 lbs or 100 kgs.

3) Ha = hectare = 100 sq. metres or 2.47 acres.

4) Hl = hectolitre = 100 litres or 22 gallons.

# ***Bessarabian Agriculture—Winter***

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## **Winter**

The transition from late autumn to winter is generally abrupt. Overnight it becomes cold. The eastern wind, which comes from Russia's far steppes, is not stopped anywhere. It is called by the Rumanians "Erivaez" and brings an icy air. The autumn mornings are wonderful! All the trees look like Christmas trees. The branches are covered with hoarfrost. How wonderful they shine in the bright sunbeams! It takes only a few days for winter to complete his arrival. Winter now strews ice and snow around. Villages and fields are wrapped in a white dress. The smoke rises from the chimneys. Everywhere is heated. Everybody looks for their fur and hide hats. They need these, so that they do not freeze. The hide hats are made from the skin of the Karakul sheep. When out driving, the farmer pulls his large driving fur over his clothing. This is large and long so that he also can cover his feet. On this occasion he also wears his felt boots. He spreads a cover over the legs. Thus the farmer or any traveler sits down on the sleigh, which is pulled by two large horses. They are the pride of the farmer. Everyone calls four, six, ten or still more horses, his own.

For trips made outside the village, only the best and most enduring horses are used. For many kilometers they drive at a trot.

He loves his horses. One of our proverbs shows us how far this love goes: "Woman dies, no one cries; horse breathes its last, man aghast." During a journey not much is spoken. With a crack of the whip, the tempo is increased.

Far more beautiful, however, are the sleigh outings through the village, which are mostly done in the afternoon.

The young farmer harnesses the horses, so that they can get some exercise, because in winter they do not need to work. They stand in the stable and get the best fodder: hay, chaff, oats, barley, and corn. Rarely, perhaps in scarce, lean years, they also get straw. In high spirits, they do not know what they should do. If one leads them from the stable, they are hardly to be held. Some of them even stand on their hind legs and bolt upright. The farmer's wife often stands beside and smiles, joyful and proud. She also prides herself somewhat with her husband's horses.

Thus the farmer and the farmer's wife sit on the sleigh. Off they go down the road. One must firmly hold the reins, so they don't run away. Parents and relatives are visited. When the horses are tired, they are driven home.

The male youth is likewise mad about horses. They must be so big that they have "flowers."<sup>(1)</sup> The young man enjoys it most when he must lay in the sleigh to keep the horses firm; then he is full of pride. He also permits himself to drive the sleigh with some of his comrades or some village-beauties or perhaps even his "future bride." His bride is also extremely proud of him when he has such a trotter in front of the sleigh.

These evening excursions are absolutely marvellous, when the moon and the stars shine high in the sky. The snow glitters like diamonds. Everything is quiet and calm. Only the snow crunches when we walk across it. The roads are empty.

From time to time one sees two to three young lads with their girls sitting on the sleigh, dashing along the roads. Attached to the horse's harness, which is often adorned with shining rosettes, are many little bells. From afar one can hear them ringing.

The children have small sledges. They romp in the yard. The larger ones use ice skates on the frozen river that meanders through the nearby valley. These afternoons will be for many, unforgettable days in their old age. Some perform true feats. It is dangerous for the one who breaks through the ice. He must be brought home very quickly because in this icy weather he can catch a very bad cold.

The farmer does not have much to do in winter. He can rest and gather his strength. He feeds and maintains his horses, not forgetting that cleanliness is the first obligation. Once or twice daily the horses are rubbed down with a currycomb and brush. He also constantly has the broom in his hand and sweeps the horse stable out. Some stables look like a room. The cows are fed the best. Many farmers have four, six, ten and more in a stable. They also possess 20, 30, 40, 50 sheep. These also need care. Those, however, who have 100, 500, even 1000 sheep in their possession need their own shepherd, who maintains and feeds them meticulously.

Most farmers have servants, their farmhand. He does the work. He is regarded and treated as if he were "one of the family." He always eats at the farmer's table. Often he selects his sleeping place in the stable. He is always 'hired' for one year. The handshake is more valuable than a work contract. Only in the rarest cases is the employment broken.

During the day, the farmer visits his friends, neighbours and acquaintances. They meet and converse about the daily news of the village, over questions of the village administration, over working of the soil, about the contents of the newly arrived newspaper, etc.

It is much more difficult for the woman. She is at home in the household and always has something to do. Cooking, washing, knitting, patching up, cleaning, etc. is all normal work that must be performed. If she did not have to do anything else, it would be good. However, in the summer she "stripped" hemp and flax. This must be processed during winter. The daughter helps her. Their spinning wheels vie. In front of the door one already hears the hum. They already talk about what they want to make from it. This year straw bags, bags, large sacks (*Plachten*) for the threshing place must be woven and sewn. Eventually the spinning is finished.

Next, the weaving loom is set up in the kitchen. Weaving begins. The daughter must also learn because each housewife must know how to do it. The loom runs almost continuously. The "weft" must match the "warp." It may not be too thin or too thick. When this work is done, then the things stated above are sewn. The daughter must do this alone, so that she can make them independently.

But sheep wool still lies around. It was washed already in summer after shearing. After it is 'carded,' it is spun according to requirements. The most marvellous blankets are woven. The patterns are diverse. From year to year they come out with new ones. Each daughter must have at least a dozen of these blankets in her dowry.

The younger generation started to crochet. The most magnificent and wonderful things come from their hands.

The largest part of the 'carded' wool is left this year, as this is made into quilts. Both the son and especially the daughter must have these in their dowry. Everybody must be equipped in such a plentiful manner that they do not need to buy anything for at least 10-15 years.

The most beautiful woven materials are also made from the wool. Because people have already become more fashion-conscious, these hand-woven materials are only used for work clothes.

The girl's needlework is done with company in the evening. Everyone wants to make more beautiful and more expensive things. In some villages lacework is produced.

Runners, carpets, etc. are also made during winter, among other things.

The winter evenings are wonderful. Neighbours, friends and acquaintances visit each other. The mothers take the spinning wheel or their knitting with them. The fathers sit together and tell of good, old times, of their economics and so on; daily events are also discussed and '*brazelter mais*' (popcorn) or sunflower kernels are eaten for a change—'*Kerna kiefert*'. Yes, bratzelter corn! Then corn grains are poured in a big kettle filled with sand and heated up. When heated up "they burst open." They look like foam, taste marvellous and besides which are very nutritious. Frequently the ones present deplore the high taxes, the hard lot they have to live in foreign lands; talk of different personalities of church and schools, of pastors and teachers, of village mayors and others of the colonists and what these have done for them. Frequently jokes are told and the whole room breaks off into bright laughter. Between 10 and 11 o'clock they go home, knowing they spent a beautiful evening. However, before they part, one song or another is still sung.

The whole year I am happy.  
In spring, the field is plowed.  
Then the lark flies up  
And sings her happy song to me;  
And when the dear summer is coming,  
How my heart is happy  
When I am standing in front of my field.  
And can see so many ears (on the wheat).  
In fall I look at the trees.  
I see apples, pears, and plums on them.  
When they are ripe, I shake them off.  
In such a way, God awards man's toil.  
And when cold winter is coming

My house is covered with snow.  
The whole field is white like chalk  
And on the ground nothing but ice.  
That is how my whole year goes.  
I thank God for it  
And I am always in a good mood  
And I think, God does all things well!

Winter wants to make its exit soon. The farmer already thinks of his business. And again the work begins. Above all he remembers to select his seed and to sieve it with the large sieve. A single seed of weed must not remain. It must be as if selected by birds. Then it is stored separately. He now calculates how much he needs in total. He must already know where and what he will sow and how much he needs for the next year as food for his family. This quantity is left untouched. He can sell the remainder. He tries to find the best time to do this. If he feels prices have risen to their highest, then he sells the grain left for sale and even drives it to the station. He can also earn the cartage.

The wine too is converted into money. Only corncobs remain. However, he must carry out still more hard work. With help of the *Maisreppler* the kernels must be 'shelled.' In this work there must be at least three more persons involved to help him. The first one takes the corn from the "*Welschkornhaus*" to the *Maisreppler*, the second inserts it and the third turns it. Usually it's a small boy that removes the corn flashes and corn from behind the Reppler. The work is difficult, but must be mastered. The farmer also plans everything here. In any case, a sufficient reserve is retained. The corn is mainly taken off and sold only when the farmer sees that he will have sufficient harvest.

The horse's harness is repaired. This is a job that the farmer does himself. For this purpose he uses an upholsterer's chair, so that he can screw the harness to it when repairing it. All the farm equipment will now be repaired. He can make everything himself, because he, a working encyclopaedia, is in his kingdom. He takes the machines into the workshop early, so that they are ready when he needs them. He also checks the stables to see if he can keep all the foals, calves, and lambs. He must similarly also calculate his own space with the total. Everything he cannot keep will be sold, if he can get the price he wants. If one of his carts no longer comes up to his expectations, then he sells it and buys another. Carts for the whole of South Bessarabia are manufactured in Teplitz, Alt-Posttal and Wittenberg. As soon as everything is finished, he can rest again. He waits most impatiently for spring.

**Translation notes:**

(1) When horses are well fed and fat they get a kind of pattern "Blumen" (flowers) on their fur.