

## Paris, Bessarabia – Part 2c

*Paris in Bessarabien:*  
*Chronik der Gemeinden Paris und Neu-Paris in Bessarabien,*  
Arthur Suckut, self-published, 1986, 321 pages.

Translator: Allen E. Konrad  
P.O. Box 157 Rowley, IA 52329  
E-mail: <onamission1939@gmail.com>  
Date Translated: March, 2020

Information in square brackets [ ] is that provided by the translator. This book has 321 pages of information. So as to not overload a digitized copy of this book, the translation will be made in parts. The translation below is pages 51-111 of Arthur Suckut's book.

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[Translation Begins]

### Contents

Administration	- - - - -	052
Administration of the Bessarabian Germans in Russia and Romania from 1814 until 1940 — Orphan and Fire Funds — Paris Village Administration		
Church Life in the Community	- - - - -	076
Our Church — Our Pastors — The Worship Service — Official Church Functions — Marriage — Holy Communion — Religious Instruction and Confirmation Lessons — Funeral — The Promised Day of Repentance and Prayer — Christmas in the Old Homeland — Tower Clock and War Memorial — Cemetery — The Brethren — Youth League for Decisive Christianity — Brethren Conferences (Bible Days)		
School Life	- - - - -	110
Supplements	- - - - -	114
Appendix #5	Attended College & University [Suckut Book, p.279]	
Appendix #6	The Senior Mayors and Clerks in the Paris Wolost [Suckut Book, p.280]	
Appendix #9	Roll of Honor for those Killed or Missing in Action during World War I and World War II from the Municipalities of Paris and Neu-Paris [Suckut Book, p.300]	

Nevertheless, in the church we had capable “front ranking men” who always had their eyes focused on the good of all, fought for it and stood tall. They stood up for justice and truth and advocated for the poor. They, like so many in the church, were of a biblical Christian character and made the Word of God the standard of their life and action. And if, per chance, did not know any more, they said to us, “We want to ask the Brethren (*Briüder*)!”

In general, the influence of the Brethren in Paris had such a strong and lasting “impression” (*Prägestempel*). as it was hardly to be found in other congregations. This is not arrogance, as others have confirmed. For example, in elections, whether for the municipality or for the church, strict care was taken to ensure that only men who had a flawless reputation and were well-respected in their own homes were elected. Anyone who held an elected office and was once found drunk was never elected again. This did not only apply to senior mayors, mayors, herder heads and municipal councils, but also to the judges of peace and their deputies; the latter were selected personalities, usually “Brethren.” The most famous of them were *Wilhelm Breitkreutz* and *Gottfried Weiß*, both of whom were long in office, both of whom belonged to the Brethren. Ottomar Eichelberg knows by reporting that at the time—he was a curator from 1934-1940—of the 18 elected parish congregation councils alone, 16 of the assembly belonged to the Brethren. Here the direction was predetermined and has proven itself through all times of affliction and preservation there in the foreign.

The elections to all bodies in the municipality were public, but secret. All men entitled to vote—women had no voting privilege there—who were older than 23 years (after their military service had ended), were invited to the government office, to the community assembly, to the “*Gromad*,” as we called it. After the agenda was announced by the officiating senior mayor or mayor, nominations came from the ranks of those present. The rule in our village was that about half of those to be elected were from the upper village and the other half from the lower village. The election was the so-called “balloting” (*Ballotage*), a ball election (*Kugelwahl*). In a box lay small wooden balls, and in passing by it each voter took a ball in his hand. With it, he proceeded to a provided “small house” (*Häuschen*), the ballot box (*Walhurne*), which had a partition in the middle, one side painted black, the other side white. Through a hole you could drop in a ball with your hand so that you could cast it into the “white” or into the “black” side as desired. The white side was called consent, the black side was rejection. As far as is known, this method has proved very successful and has protected against electoral fraud.

The choice of the senior mayor/mayor was also so common in the large and elongated community—without any kind of regulation—that one was once chosen from the upper village, then once one from the lower village. This, too, has proved its worth! It was not uncommon for a proven man to be re-elected or confirmed in office several times in a row. For example, if the senior mayor was one of the lower end, then his representative was one from the upper end, so everyone was treated fairly and one was satisfied with it and everything went in good order. The elections carried out still had to be confirmed by the upper authority. Until then, the old mayor was in office, that is to say, officiated as a “candidate.” Once it happened—it was 1923—that the elected mayor had to resign because of irregularities, and his deputy, the “candidate,” was appointed his successor.

The respective heads of the Orphans Fund and the Fire Fund were also elected in this way. As a rule, however, it was the officiating senior mayor/mayor; in Romanian time from 1918-1940, he was officially called *Primar*. The clerk (*Schreiber*) was now a civil servant and had the title of “*Notar*.” These were now educated people, often people from the Werner School in Sarata. Most of them became teachers in our communities, some became clerk/administrative officers. Their duty was all correspondence in the language of the office at the moment, until 1918 Russian, then Romanian.

In the *Odessaer Heimatkalender* of the years 1881-1914 (not all available!) statistics were conducted concerning the administration, churches and schools in all municipalities of southern Russia including Bessarabia. All names that were still to be found there, without claiming to be complete or correct, are listed in the Appendix. From the Romanian period, the information comes partly from the *Heimatkalendern in Bessarabien*, but partly laboriously “gathered” by questioning our old people. Some readers will probably find mistakes and say that it cannot be true; again, the remark that we could not do better. This applies, by the way, to all lists in the Appendix: immigrant lists to Bessarabia in 1816, emigrations from Bessarabia between 1857 and 1929/30, list of resettlers in October 1940, list of killed in action and missing persons in the two world wars, list of emigrants after 1945—and also the above-mentioned lists of administration, church and school (students and teachers).

I will be grateful for every hint, but it can no longer be improved in the present history, no more changes to be made. Perhaps—just perhaps someone will find a taste for this work and continue with the one before us, and after a few years he will be able to present a new, better work. To be able to experience this would be a great pleasure for me! I have to be satisfied—for reasons that have been mentioned several times—when we people of Paris, New Paris and those descended from Paris find here only a *Homeland Reading Book* that wants to take us a little into our past and show where we came from, how we lived and what has become of us in the “mirror of history” to this day.

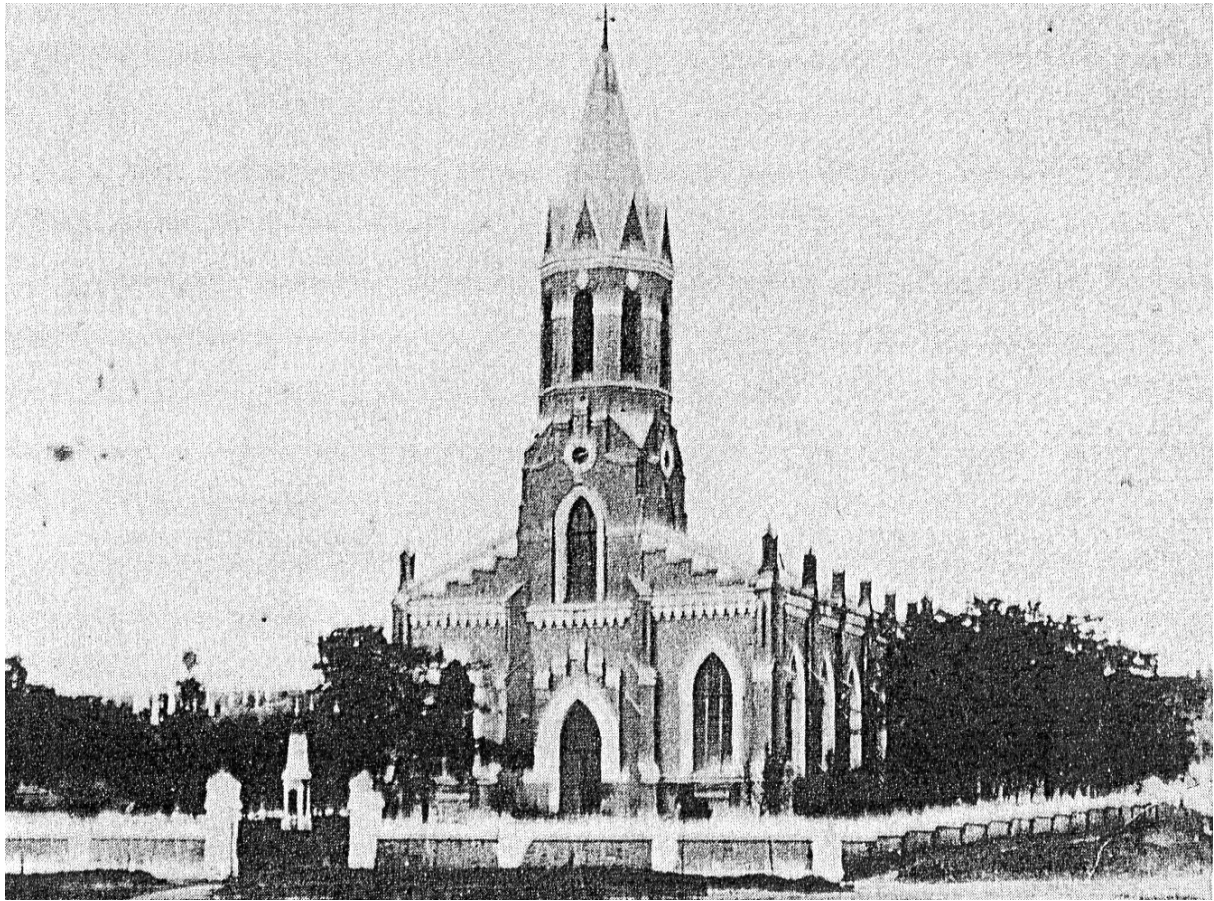
## **Church Life in the Community**

It is already mentioned in the “Parish History of Alt-Elft.” But here, written about our village, a lot more is to be added.

### **Our Church—on the Steppe**

The new church—it was already the third in Paris—was built from 1903-1905, according to plans by the architect Gotthilf Deeg from the Cherson area. He has built several churches in Bessarabia, including some schools. He is well known among the building commission. He is said to have died (*umgekommen*) later. The church was a Gothic brick building, with red fired bricks, which were made in the clay hill just behind the church, as described in detail elsewhere. Unfortunately, we do not know the dimensions. Rudolf Weiß said it was about 40 meters [131 feet] long and about 18 meters [59 feet] wide (it was larger than that of Friedenstal and Lichtental, by the same builder). It had about 950 seats, if necessary a few hundred could be placed (through benches). The height of the tower is not known. According to Rudolf Weiß and other experts of the Bessarabia churches, it had the highest tower of all German churches. It was

not the most beautiful church, but certainly one of the largest. Dr. Karl Stumpp, who was in Paris with Oskar Kehrer and a choir from Tarutino in 1930, called our church “Steppe Cathedral” (*Steppendom*)

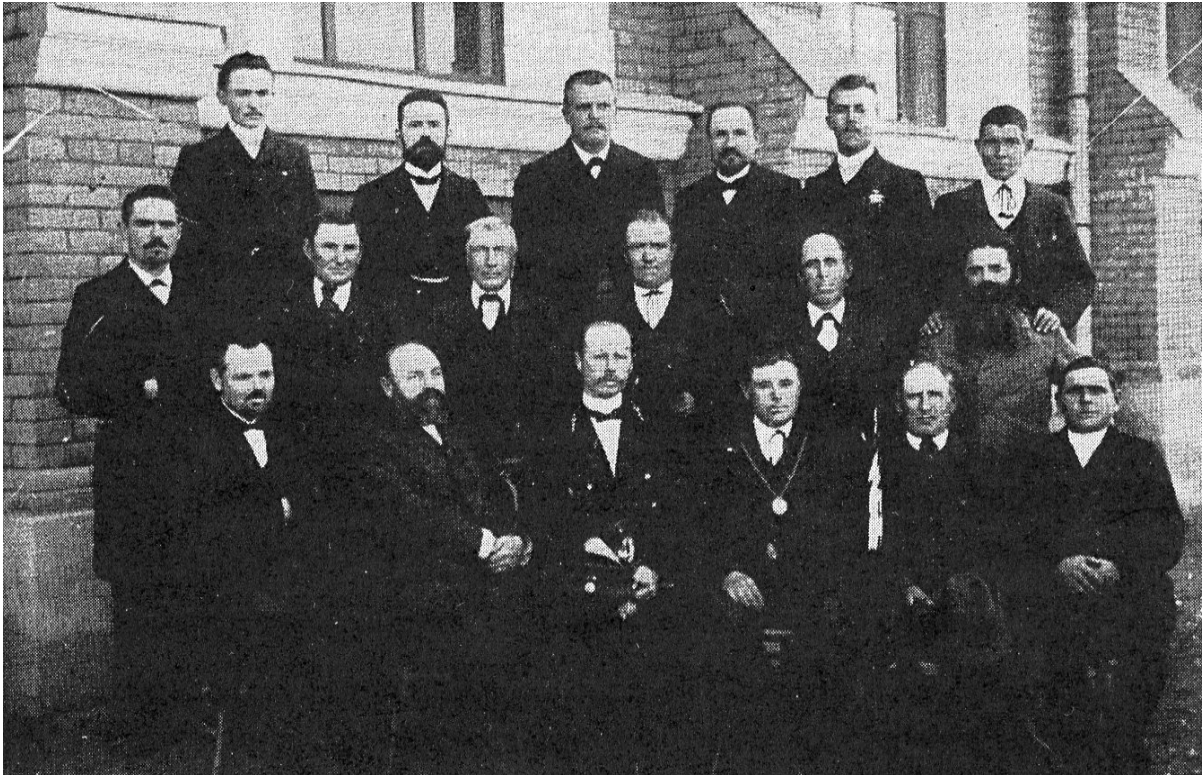


The new church, built 1903-1905, the cemetery in the background

He also played the Walker organ, which came from Ludwigsburg, and expressed himself in high praise: “This organ alone is a divine service, it is the queen of the organs in Bessarabia!” [

He also praised the church choir in Paris! “Only Low German singers can sing with such pure sounds and so clear.!” That is not our opinion, these are words from qualified mouths! For example, when at the beginning of the thirties in Teplitz the Bessarabian choirs met, the choir of Paris, under the long-time director Johannes Eichelberg, won the 2<sup>nd</sup> prize. Did the “Werner Choir” (1<sup>st</sup> prize) perhaps pay some advance money (*Vorschuß*) (that was expressed by a person not from-Paris!)?

Organ, bells, etc. are already described elsewhere; a curiosity is still to be mentioned. The organ made a by-pass of Paris (France) to us, the little unknown Paris in South Russian steppe.

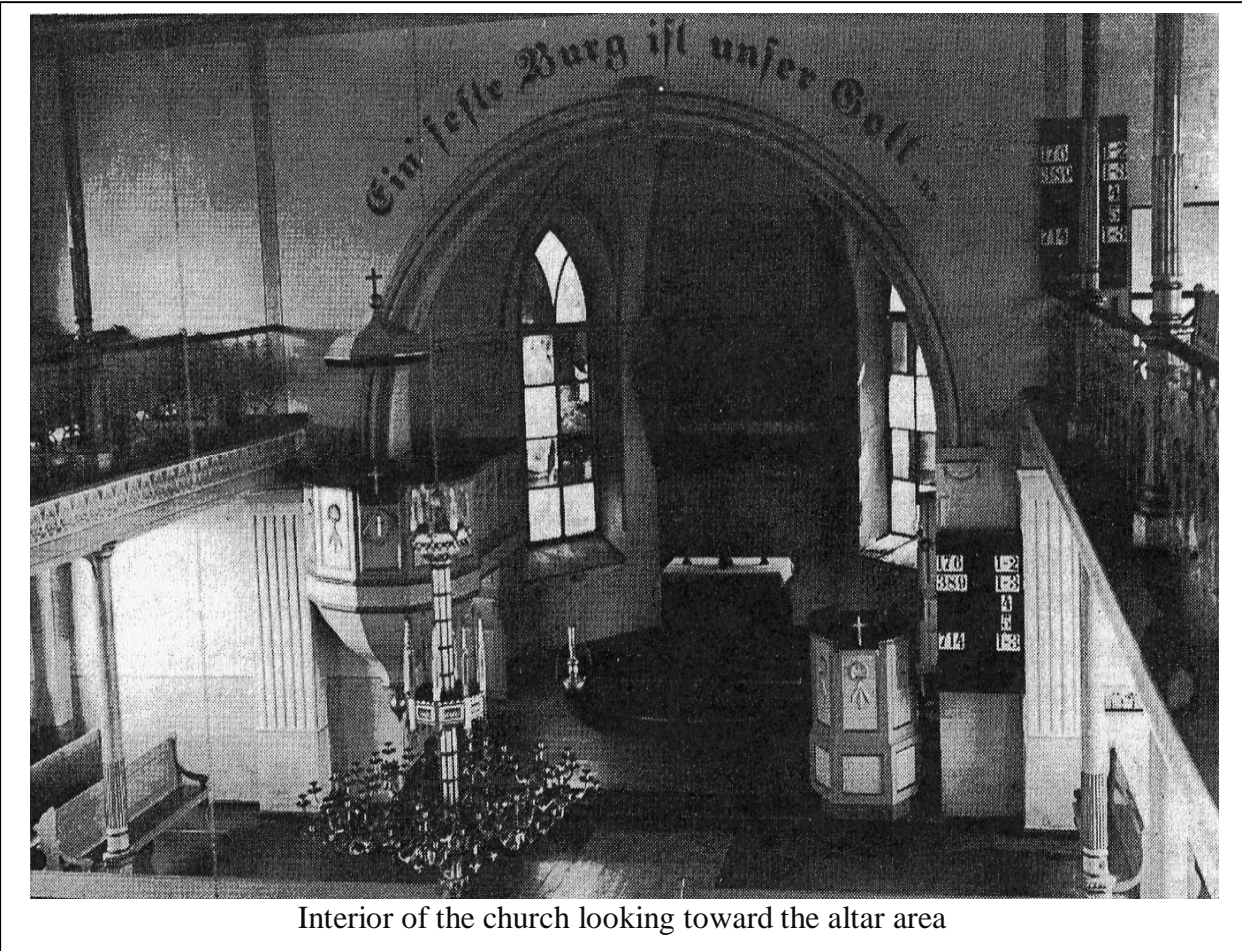


Parish Council and Building Committee 1905 (from left to right): 1<sup>st</sup> row—Andreas Kehrer, Theodor Beck, Architect and builder Gotthilf Deeg, Senior Mayor Wilhelm Breitkrenz, Gottfried Suckut, Gottlieb Springer. 2<sup>nd</sup> row—Friedrich Heer, Gottlieb Franz, Gottlieb Pfahl, Gottfried Stelter, Christian Suckut, (Feodor Gavriluk, brick-layer?). 3<sup>rd</sup> row—August Erdmann (?), -unknown-, Jakob Höllwarth, Christian Weiß, Immanuel Höllwarth, Ferdinand Radies

The total cost of the church building has already been mentioned elsewhere. So are the repeated renovations and changes.

The interior had 18 rows of benches on both sides, separated for men and women. The two balconies also separated boys and girls. Married people always sat downstairs, and single persons after the age of 40. In front of the organ was the choir loft for the church choir and for the teachers. Upstairs, even as downstairs, there were benches along the outer walls. In front of the chancel, a little to the side, stood four diagonal benches.

The large Last Supper painting in the altar area was a donation from the Women's Association, which had it made especially for this purpose in Odessa in 1905. At the Resettlement of 1940, teacher Albert Eckert cut it out of the frame, wrapped it around a broomstick and, well packed, took it along. It ended up getting lost by his wife during the escape (*Flucht*) [toward the end of WW2]. Three huge candle holder lights originally hung over the central aisle, each with 36 candles for the Advent season and Christmas season. The middle one was later removed because the ceiling could not hold its weight. They hung on long chains and were a beautiful decoration for the church.



Behind the church was a house for spare benches, fuel and cleaning equipment. The whole yard was surrounded by a brick wall, staggered on the long sides, because the terrain was sloping. In the courtyard, next to coniferous cedar trees (*Thujabäumen*), stood above all the “real acacia,” with long thorns and their pod fruit. Two large bells composed the beautiful ringing. The people of Paris who had moved to Kashpalat, when the wind was in the right direction, were able to hear our bells (more than 20 km [12.5 miles] away!) and thought with sadness and tears in their eyes of their homeland, of their birthplace. *Dedication of the new church was on 2 October, 1905, on Harvest Thanksgiving Sunday—a great Sunday of thanksgiving!* Unfortunately, there are no reports of this.

### **Our Pastors**

From its founding in 1816 to 1840, Paris belonged to Arzis and from 1840 until 1940 it belonged to the Alt-Elft (Fere-Champenois) Parish. The names of the pastors who served and when are as follows: Williams (1816-1836); Gatich (1836-1840); Gottl. Friedr. Jordan (1840-1857); Vacant (1857-1859); Gottf. Melch. Walker (1859-1873); Vacant (1873-1874); Baumann (1874-1875); Ludwig Zeller (1875-1885); Schlarb (1885-1887); Johannes Jundt (1887-1908); Arthur Hansen (1908-1911); Alexander Simson (1911-1938); Jakob Rivinius (1938-1940).

## **Worship Service**

It was held at least once a month by the pastor, who lived and served in Alt-Elft. Otherwise by the respective sexton-teacher or sometimes by the curator, that is, a member of the church council, as already mentioned elsewhere. The visit was usually very good, which is why we needed these large churches. The liturgy in pastoral worship service was more detailed than in the reading services. At the end of each worship service, the verse was sung while standing: "All Glory be to God on High..." (*Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr...*).

Ottomar Eichelberg, the last curator of the congregation, has written extensively about the worship service and all the ecclesiastical acts, festivals and celebrations in his book "I will Reflect the Grace of the Lord" (*Ich will der Gnade des Herrn gedenken*), where there is much to be found about our history, including many pictures. Every person from Paris is advised to buy this book. It costs only 20 marks and is available at the office of the "Evangelischegemeinschaftverband Nord-Süd e. V., 2875 Ganderkesee 2 (Bookholzberg)."

We are now going to give our "Eichels Otto," as we in Paris called him, his chance to speak.

## **Ecclesiastical Acts of Office**

Report concerning the activity of a sexton-teacher in Bessarabia by W. Gäßler, last sexton in Paris.

The title "Sexton" (*Küster*) in Bessarabia was not the correct name for a minister, in accordance with his ministry and his duties in the ecclesiastical field. In Germany, a "sexton" is the bell-ringer (*Glockenzieher*), sacristan (*Mesner*), that is, church servant (*Kirchendiener*). This designation brought us some difficulties after the Resettlement in the presentation of our sexton certificates to the state church for the employment of religious teachers or lecturers. The leading church officials were familiar with a "preacher-teacher" (*Predigerlehrer*) but not a "sexton." This designation only existed in Bessarabia.

The duty of a Bessarabia sexton-teacher was to take care of the youth in both religious and ethnic areas. He often had to represent the pastor and as a rule also taught religion at school. He had an obligation to make visits to the sick, to advise and to help. The majority of the population had full confidence in their sexton and came with all sorts of worries and needs.

At school, he was the "German teacher." Teachers employed by the state no longer had the opportunity, sometimes did not have the courage to teach German, as this could have had negative consequences for them. The sexton-teacher, who received his salary from the parish, therefore had the task not only to teach German, but also fostering of the German song and to see to it to ensure that the German folklore with its customs and practices was preserved. .

His service was diverse. He was a representative of the pastor, who sometimes came only after a number of weeks and then only conducted the worship service. He had to conduct the reading service every Sunday, even on the festival days, where he also played the organ. Every Sunday

afternoon there was a children's teaching (*Kinderlehre*), where the young people between the ages of 15 and 18 were taught the doctrine of faith.

He gave confirmation instruction in a period of two to three months prior to confirmation. The pastor gathered those of his parish to be confirmed only one week before the confirmation to be examined.

He was also the leader of the church choir. A teacher who could not play the organ and understood little about music had no chance of being employed as a sexton.

In most cases, the baptisms were performed by the sexton. Confirmation by the pastor was, in my opinion, only a formality.

Funerals were also conducted in most cases by the sexton-teacher. It was quite troublesome for the people to get the pastor, who often lived many kilometers away, and then bring him back home.

The sexton- teachers did this job very well, as they often knew the conditions of the mourners better than the pastor. The sexton also kept the church records (birth register and death register) in duplicate. One copy remained in the congregation, the second went to the parish office. The church office was audited annually by a representative of the Consistory.

Each congregation expected their sexton- teacher to hold an extensive Christmas party with the distribution of a gift to all school children. This brought a lot of work in the weeks leading up to Christmas, until the verses and songs were rehearsed. It was a wonderful custom that contributed a lot to deepening faith and religiosity among young and old.



School as seen from the hill by the cemetery, to the right the residence of the sexton-teacher

[Continued in Paris, Bessarabia – Part 2d]