

Teacher Immanuel Müller

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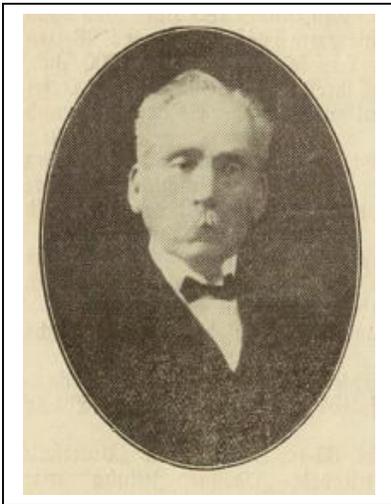
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[Note: Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

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[Translation Begins]

Teacher Immanuel Müller



He was snatched away from the midst of life, from his daily work. Suddenly, unexpectedly. Death has taken the old gnarled oak tree with a single massive axe blow. Immanuel Müller died of a stroke on 23 March at the age of not quite 72. On Friday, he was still about his usual activities in the school; on Saturday, he lay on his deathbed; on Sunday, in the coffin; on Monday, he was put to bed in the cold grave. A quick walk from finiteness to infinity! Only a few steps from life in motion to eternal rest!

He was a teacher for fifty years (1879-1929), of which over 30 years a sexton-teacher in the German communities. He dedicated himself absolutely and totally to the service of teaching and put into practice, without interruption in that long span of time, exemplary punctuality and conscious responsibility. It is only very few who are allowed to work so long in this profession. To my knowledge, it is the first instance where a teacher has remained at his post for fifty years in the German communities of Bessarabia.

Fifty years of work as a teacher. Only he will and can rightly appreciate it who has a deeper understanding of its significance.

Immanuel Müller was born in the village of Leipzig on 25 June, 1857. He was the first who went out from this village to earn for himself an education going beyond public elementary school. This was for the time an event and testifies to the inner spiritual urgency of the then 16 year old boy. He enrolled in the so-called evening classes (*Fortbildungsklasse*) in Tarutino. It was in 1873 that the Tarutino church school started a class for boys which strove for the further development of their better gift and their zeal for learning. Under the direction of excellent

teacher Diedrich, the boys made extraordinary progress, and when Diederich was called to Odessa as a secondary school teacher after three years, their interest in further education gained so much strength that most of them went to the village of Benkendorf and enrolled in the Boys' Secondary School opened by Pastor Schomburg, which was held in the commercial building of Count Benkendorf. Immanuel Müller was among them. Pastor Schomburg relocated to Saratov on the Volga River in 1879. Several pupils, including the future Pastors Beck, Steinwand, and others, also went. Müller did not. He took a call to teach and became sexton-teacher in his hometown of Leipzig in 1879. In the same year, he married E. Singer from Hoffnungstal, his now mourning widow, who shared 50 years of joy and sorrow with him.

In 1892, he took a call as a sexton-teacher to Alt-Freudental in the Kherson *Gouvernement*. In order to give his children a higher education, he moved to Akkerman in 1907, today called Cetatea Alba. Here he was a sexton-teacher of the German Evangelical congregation for a number of years and, at the same time, provided Evangelical Lutheran Confession religious instructions to the students at various middle schools. In 1912, after he took the corresponding exam, he became a teacher of the German language at the Boys' Secondary School. So he was sexton-teacher for 33 years and secondary school teacher for 17 years.

Müller sought and found his greatest happiness in life together with his family; however, he was not spared the heavy blows of fate. The hardest to meet him was the death of his oldest son Otto, a district doctor in Sarata, who died of typhus in September of 1920, a victim of his career. This wound never completely healed.

He found the highest satisfaction of life in the exercise of his profession. His surroundings, outward considerations, were narrowly confined. What was going on concerned him seemingly little. But as for the technical or scholarly things related to his profession, for that he had a strong interest all along and at all times. "In the midst of things" (*In medias res*), so he once began a letter to me, and so it always was; whatever thing, if it pertained to his thing, he was always caught up in the middle of it.

While in Kherson, he was one of the leaders among the German faculty. Thanks to him the phonetic method (*Buchstabiermethode*) was replaced in those villages already at the beginning of the eighties by the sound method (*Lautiermethode*) whereby the whole method of instruction in the public school acquired a different approach [Note below]. The German church schools in the Großliebental District received a fresh impetus at that time. Through the excellent school work of the teachers of that area, all strongly influenced by their progressive colleague Müller, I was deeply impressed while I was attending as a guest at a teachers conference in Neuburg in 1887.

Müller had a strong talent for graphic arts and singing. He put to work his groundbreaking handwriting and singing lessons in the schools of his area. He was the first who handed out nice German exercise books of purely methodological principles. His school choirs and church choirs were acknowledged to be the best; it was wonderful what he brought out of the throats of ordinary village people. As already mentioned, he left his sexton-teacher job in the village in order to provide higher education for his children. As a village schoolmaster, he could have let his sons continue without further education.

Even at the secondary school, he spared no effort and looked for funds to promote the instruction of German; and above all, he sought to make it easier and more desirable for the students to learn the German language. Since the furnished textbooks seemed unsuitable to him, he worked on his own and made it available after it was approved by the Ministry. A further reading book for the upper classes is on his desk, almost ready for printing. Among his last wishes, it was that this work would be finalized. Then he wanted to retire, build for himself a small house on the already acquired small yard, and spend the evening of his life in quiet and peace. God decided otherwise. Now he has found quiet and peace much earlier "deep under the earth". God grant him a blessed resurrection (*Urständ*)! His life was an example for us of dutiful diligence and professional tenacity, his death a reminder, with proper effort, to spread a seed which bears the fruits of eternity.

A.M.

[Translation Ends]

[Note]:

Buchstabierrmethode: Learn the symbol of each letter in the alphabet and give each symbol a sound. Then produce the sounds of each letter in a word. Example for the word "Absolve": symbol of first letter ("a"), pronounce the sound; followed up with symbol of the next letter ("b"), pronounce the sound; so on until all letter symbols have been pronounced one after the other—"a" "b" "s" "o" "l" "v" "e". The sounds spoken together more rapidly give the sound of the whole word. The problem is that not every symbol has the same sound in every word, which creates difficulty for first learners.

Lautiermethode: symbol of a letter, next to it a picture of something which begins with the sound of that letter (example: letter "A" and a picture of an "Apple" next to the symbol); or a picture within which is the sound of that letter (example: letter "i" and a picture of a "Tiger" next to the symbol). First learner becomes acquainted with the various sounds a single symbol can have.