

German Literature in Bessarabia 06—Karl Knauer

Source: *Deutscher Volkskalender für Bessarabien – 1935*
Tarutino

Press and Printed by *Deutschen Zeitung Bessarabiens*
Page 125-128

Translated by: Allen E. Konrad
P.O. Box 157 Rowley IA 52329
<onamission1939@gmail.com>
February, 2023

Source Location: <http://bit.ly/21v8IWY>
Under 1935 click — <urn:nbn:de:bvb:355-ubr13931-9>
Open Thumbnail & scroll for specific pages

=====

To have a better understanding of the following translation, it would serve you well if you were able to view German Literature in Bessarabia 01—Introduction.

[Note: A word of appreciation to Elvire Eberhardt for helping me get the Schwäbisch translated correctly. Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

=====

[Translation Begins]

Karl Knauer

Born in Sarata in 1889 as a Swabian farmer's son. I have ever since had an open eye for the beauty of our steppe homeland. The many legends and stories of the Germans of Bessarabia were mostly passed on to me by my mother. 1903-1907—I attended the Werner School; dedicated myself to the teaching profession. 1907-1909—teacher in Nowo-Danilowka, 1909-1915—in Mariewka, 1915-1922—in Friedensfeld, since 1922—in Mariewka.

(Well-known and popular in our readership because of his both serious and cheerful poems in the Swabian dialect, which are both in form and content on a remarkable level. Best done: *And Should Not Grumble* (Ond foll net murre) in the *Kalender—1934.*)

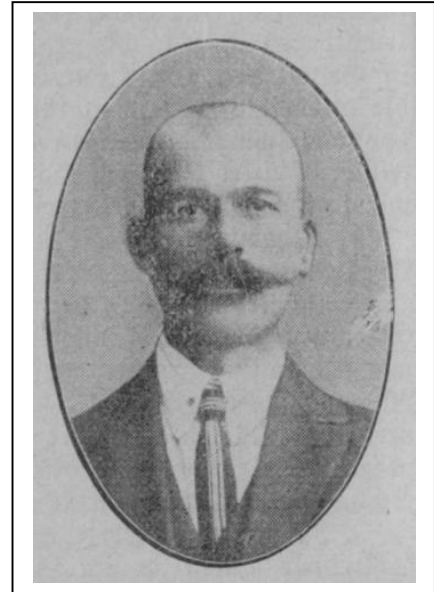
[One Story and Two Poems by Karl Knauer]

a) How We Came to Our Family Name

If Knurrer-, Knauser- or Knickerbastel from Schlesingen had understood governing as well as saving, he would have ousted the local knight as senior official from the village. But now

Bastel's father, the old Toni Knurrer, had not sent him, Sebastian, to the monastery school at a young age, so he could neither read nor write. What a very young Bastel (*Bästele*) does not learn, an older Bastel certainly does not learn any more, and everyone cannot also be local knight and senior official. Well—a capable local knight must also have loyal and frugal subordinates, and Bastel wanted to be regarded as a frugal citizen.

Especially at the time when the Bastel Knurrer wanted to found his own household, it was customary in Germany to register the young house father with a fixed family name in the senior official's chamber. But that Bastel should bear the hated nickname (*Beinamen*) of his father—Snarl (*Knurrer*), Miser (*Knauser*), or Grumbler (*Knicker*), did not please him at all, so he did not want to burden his descendants. Michel [son of Mr.] Schultheiß, who also recently married, had the beautiful name “Schulze” [Mayor] registered for himself, and Stoffel [son of Mr.] Kornmüller had also taken advantage of his father's occupation during his marriage and simply had registered as “Christophorus Müller”. And to be portrayed as “Sebastianus Knurrer or Knauser” in the senior official's chamber forever, no, that really went beyond the hat band for our Bastel.



Bastel took heart and himself went to the local knight in the senior official chamber and put forward his request. The senior official said that Knurrer, Knauser or Knicker would not be entirely bad either as family names, and that his father knew well the Knurrers with the Knausers, and also familiar with him, Bastel, and no one in the area understood saving better than old Toni Snarl (*Knurrer*) with his offspring. But if Bastel absolutely wanted to have another nickname, surname or family name, he, the senior official, would help him to do so. He will soon visit Bastel in his home and then, with thorough care, choose the appropriate nickname for him himself. Bastel was satisfied with that.

One evening, shortly before the marriage, the senior official visited Bastel. He was led into the front room and a burning oil lamp was placed on the table. As soon as the senior official had looked at the poor household within the four walls, Bastel said that if the senior official did not mind, one could probably extinguish the oil lamp, we already knew each other and in the dark a person could talk just as good and save oil. The local knight agreed and they sat in the dark. Shortly afterwards, the local knight heard a rasping and scraping in Bastel's corner. He believed that in the dark it does not matter how you sit. When sitting, you could finally also tear pants, so he preferred to take them off. The senior official got up, wished Bastel a good night's sleep and groped for the exit door. Bastel's family name was guaranteed with him.

When Bastel Knurrer registered in the official chamber as the new housefather, the senior official said that he could not find a better family name for him than "Genauer," since it was more precise than close. Bastel asked whether he would write out the name for him. The senior official clerk took the goose quill and wrote it out. Bastel said he had nothing to complain about, except—that the name was a little too long. His descendants, who hopefully learned to read and

write, could use too much ink. The senior official said with a smile that it was finally one and the same thing whether one wrote in “Genauer” or “Gnauer”, because, after all, the Swabian slurred over the first “e”. Bastel also wondered whether the first large letter, being large and long, and needed a lot of ink, could not be exchanged for another, shorter one. The senior official clerk thought that a “K” would also take care of that. The senior official agreed and Bastel was satisfied. He was registered—“Sebastianus Knauer,” Schlesinger citizen, in the Holy Roman Empire.

[In the poetry below, the original German is also given in order for the reader to see the rhyming words at the end of each line which are difficult to reproduce in English]

b) Vom Toppeltock

*Großväterchen im Silberhaar
Sitzt unter seiner Enkelschar
Im Strahlenglanz der Steppensonn’;
Ihm bracht’ sie achtzig Sommer schon.
Sein rauh Gesicht, sein zitternd Knie
Erinnern noch an Fleiß und Müh.
Zwar hat das Alter ihn geknickt,
Das Leben manches Leid geschickt,
Doch Heimatlieb mit Treu gepaart
Hat ihm sein Steppenheim bewahrt.
“Großväterchen, erzähl’ uns doch
Vom Räuberhauptmann Toppeltock!
Noch nie hast Du von ihm erzählt,
Trotzdem wir Dich schon oft gequält.”
— “So setzet euch und seid ganz still,
Wenn ich euch jetzt erzählen will...
Er war ein Kind vom Schwarzmeerstrand,
Hat seine Eltern nie gekannt.
Zeitlebens ganz versagt ihm blieb’ —
Der Heimat Glück — die Elternlieb’.
Er wuchs in fremdem Hause auf,
Drum kommt in seinem Lebenslauf,
Von guter und von schlechter Lehr,
Der Widerspruch in Taten her.
Der eine pries ihn lebenslang
Für Rat und Hilf im Lebensdrang,
Der andre hat ihn schwer verflucht,
Weil bitter er ihn heimgesucht.
Auch fanden Tierlein bei ihm Schutz,
Wenn sie gequält der Menschen Trutz...
Bei Akkerman, der Herbst war naß,
Da gab’s einst einen Heidenspaß.
Ein armer Gaul, bedeckt mit Schaum,*

b) About Toppeltock

Grandfather in silver hair
Sits among his grandchildren
In the radiant glow of the Steppe sun;
She has already given him eighty summers.
His rugged face, his trembling knee
Still remember diligence and effort.
Although age has bent him,
Life sent many a sorrow,
Yet love for homeland coupled with faithfulness
His Steppe-home has preserved him.
“Grandfather, for all that, tell us
About Robber Captain Toppeltock!
You have never told about him,
In spite of us already so often tormenting you.”
— “So sit down and be real quiet,
As I want to tell you now...
He was a child from the Black Sea beach,
Never knew his parents.
Throughout his life, he was completely denied —
The homeland good fortune — the parental love.
He grew up in a strange home.
So comes in his journey through life,
From good and from bad teaching,
The contradiction in deeds.
The one praised him all his life,
For advice and help in the urgency to live,
The other has cursed him severely,
Because bitterly it haunts him.
Little animals also found shelter with him,
When they are tormented by the people...
Near Akkerman, autumn was wet,
There was once a lot of heathen amusement.
A poor old horse, covered with foam,

*Bewegt' im Schmutz den Karren kaum.
 Darauf im neuen Pelz ein Jud,
 Mit vollem Teerfaß—Handelsgut.
 Beim Peitschen rechnete er nach,
 Wieviel Profit sein Teer versprach.
 Doch, sieh! Er stirbt da fast vor Schreck,
 Der Toppeltock steht vor ihm keck:
 "Mensch," schreit er, "bist Du nicht gescheit,
 Tut nicht das arme Tier Dir leid?"
 Er zerrt ihn schnell vom Karren ab,
 Wirft auch das Teerfaß noch herab
 Und schlägt mit einem mächtigen Stein
 Dem Faß die beiden Böden ein.
 Er läßt im Pelz den Juden auch
 Durchkriechen durch des Fasses Bauch,
 Bis auch der letzte Tropfen gar
 Vom Faß auf seinem Pelze war.
 Dann zahlt er den Verlust am Teer
 Und gibt zum Abschied noch die Lehr:
 "Entlastung hat dem Tier gebracht,
 Was 's Teerbad Deinem Pelz gemacht.
 Drum nimm zusammen, was noch Dein,
 Und scher' Dich schnell zur Stadt hinein.
 Zuäl; fürder arme Tiere nicht,
 Sonst folgt Dir Räubers Strafgericht!"*

Hardly moving the cart in the dirt.
 Then in the new fur coat, a Jew,
 With a full coal-tar barrel—trade goods.
 When whipping, he calculated,
 How much profit his tar promised.
 But, look! He almost dies of fright,
 Toppeltock stands boldly in front of him:
 "Man," he shouts, "are you not smart,
 Don't you feel sorry for the poor animal?"
 He quickly pulls him off the cart,
 Also throws down the tar barrel
 And breaks with a huge stone
 The two bottoms in the barrel.
 He also lets the Jew in the fur coat
 Crawl through the barrel's belly,
 Until even the last drop is completely
 From the barrel onto his fur coat.
 Then he pays for the loss of tar
 And as a farewell, he gives the lesson:
 "Relief has been brought to the animal,
 What the tar bath has done to your fur coat.
 So take together what else is yours,
 And quickly get to the city.
 Do not torment the poor animals,
 Otherwise, robber's judgment will follow you!"

c) s Schwobagmüat

*I ben e Glied vom deutsche Gschlecht,
 Druß ben i stolz ond freu mi recht.
 On daß drbei e Schwob i ben,
 E echter, des erfreut moin Senn.
 I schwätz, wia mir dr Schnabel gwachse,
 Bei Platte, Bayre oder Sachse.
 Drom mecht i gschwend dir kurz a deute,
 An was der Schwob kascht onterscheide.*

*De Vogel kennscht du an soim Liad,
 Dr Schwob am beschte an soim Gmüat.
 Ond wenn r oft ao wortfaul schoi't
 Er woiß oft meahner, wia 'n 'r sait.
 Er bleibt oft schüchter en soim Ställe,
 Dens Herz vrtraut er neit glei älle.
 Ond kascht du ehm soi Herz agwenne,
 No seihscht n ao von uff' ond enne.*

c) Swabian Disposition

I am a member of the German race,
 I am proud about that and am glad.
 And because I am a Swabian,
 A real one, that gladdens my mind.
 I speak, as my mouth was created
 With Low Germans, Bavarians or Saxons.
 So I would like to quickly and briefly suggest
 About how a Swabian can be detected

The bird you recognize by its song,
 The Swabian at best by his disposition.
 And when he often appears to be reserved
 He knows often much more than what he says.
 He stays shy in his stall,
 His heart does not trust everyone immediately.
 And could you win his heart,
 Then you also see him inside and out.

*Dr Schwob isch gradraus em Gespräch,
Doch kommt ehm aber ebber z näch,
No ka k'n 'r ao äls saugrob soi,
No donnerts, blitzt's ond schlagts ao oi.
Dr Schwob, er hot n guate Mage,
Ka jede Kritik wohl vrtrage,
Doch ois macht ehm abscheulich Gremme,
So du ehm willscht soin Frohsenn nemme.*

*Mr sait, s geahnt ehm em Leabeslaof
Am neunte Tag erscht d Aoge auf,
Mit vierzig Johr käm soi Brstand — ?
No warglet d Schwobestroich durchs Land.
Tuat mr ehn no dr Dommheit zeihe,
No ka dr Schwob sich recht druf freue.
Dort, wo dia dümmschte Stroich passiere,
Möcht jeder Schwob soi Herkonft führe.*

*Ond so e rauhe Schwobeart
Ischt doch versteckt hehlinge zart,
Hot enne dren en süaße Kern.
Dr Schwob hot rauhe Schale gern:
Dr Alt verwetst soim lunge Hiasel:
“Sait mr zua s Vatters Gosch ao Rüssel?”
Em Kend putzt d Muatter s dreckig Mäule:
“Bischt halt moi liabs ond herzigs Säule!”*

*So ischt dr Schwob, so ischt soi Gmüat
Ond wärs net so, s gäb ao koi Liad:
De recht Akkord em foine To'
Verschöanert erscht dr grobe no.
Ufrichtig, gradaus, oft saugrob,
So ischt soi Gmüat, so ischt dr Schwob.
So ka s en onserm Schwobeleabe
De liablichscht Wohlklang z' semmegeabe.*

The Swabian is straight forward in conversation,
Yet if something comes too close to him,
Then he can also get to be very rude ,
Then it thunders, lightnings and strikes.
The Swabian, he has a good stomach,
Can tolerate every criticism well,
Yet one thing makes him terribly angry,
If you want to take from him his happy mind.

One says, it goes for him so in his life's journey
On the ninth day the eyes first open,
With 40 years comes his understanding — ?
Then the Swabian jokes roll through the land.
If one then points out to him the stupidity,
Then can the Swabian properly rejoice in it.
There, where the dumbest nonsense takes place,
Every Swabian wants to convey his ancestry.

And so a coarse Swabian kind of disposition
Is certainly hidden and concealed,
Has inside it a sweet kernel.
The Swabian has a coarse shell gladly:
The old lets his young offspring know:
“Does one say muzzle to a father's foul mouth?
The mother wipes the child's dirty mouth:
“You are my dear and beautiful piglet!”

So is the Swabian, so is his disposition
And were it not so, there would be no song:
The correct harmony is in the fine tune
Embellishing then first the coarseness.
Straight forward, straight on, often coarse,
So is his disposition, so is the Swabian.
So can it be in our Swabian life
The loveliest harmony coming together.

[Translation Ends]