

Recollections from the Time as Bible Colporteur

By Johannes Bartsch, Jr.

1. How I became a Bible Colporteur

Since I know how deeply self-interest and self-love are rooted in the human heart, and since I have been redeemed from that vain, transitory being, as I write these lines, to the extent that illumination and understanding are given to me, I want merely to seek to bring out the gracious drawing, leading, and guiding of our heavenly Father, that in the event the following will be read, it may contribute something to the glory of God the Father.

It was late summer in 1875 when I heeded the repeated requests of my mother and brothers to visit them in Russia. At that time I was, as one would say, a successful traveling salesman in central Germany, and, in addition to my fixed salary, five dollars of daily expense money was available to me. However, up to that time I did not have any money left over, since I had given free rein to all my cravings, with the exception of (*games, sports, or gambling?*).

Mother and brothers had moved in 1871 from Prussia to Russia to the Volga settlement of the Mennonites where the older brother had been ordered to go as a teacher.

I had finally made the decision to take a trip over there to visit for two months. I had also saved more recently in order to have more accumulated than only money for travel.

I arrived at my loved ones almost unexpectedly after a trip with some difficulties because I did not understand a word of the Russian language.

In the settlement a different spirit wafted than in my earlier surroundings. This Spirit did not neglect to also exercise his workings on me. I asked myself, "What is truth; where does one find truth?" Since as a child I came out of school and entered into business, except for the time of baptism, I had paid little attention to God's Word and calling. Now I began secretly to search in the Bible. I say "secretly" because I would have been terribly embarrassed had someone found me reading the Bible. I believe I started with the Gospel of John, but did not get beyond the first chapter. I stood there before a divine height and depth; I felt here only could be Truth. Also here must be light and from here come life.

Several of the brethren there urged me, because of the salvation of my soul, to give up the return trip to Germany and to stay in Russia. I felt my own instability, and since I was

also promised additional benefits since every Mennonite immigrant received a piece of land – 160 acres--I decided to stay in Russia. I continued searching the scriptures, and soon gained more knowledge, as well as the desire to do something for the Lord. In the meanwhile, I had leased some land and began to try manufacturing (*Cichorien?*). I carried on this business for two years, but without any great profit. My soul was concerned about doing some work for the glory of God. Therefore I would daily go to the steppe to be undisturbed and alone lift heart and hands and call upon God who had redeemed me, that He would bring the desire to serve Him to reality in me. How and by what means, I did not know, but I felt the need to continue praying that the Lord would answer that prayer.

During this time a colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society happened to come to our settlement. I became better acquainted with this man. When we met at a later time, he told me that in the Society a position for a colporteur had opened. I felt this was the position to which the Lord would direct me. At first my human nature resisted having to carry and peddle books, but soon the inner voice won the victory and the love for the word of truth. I felt compelled to also offer this to others; yes, I believed I needed to offer the Word of God to everyone and be able to convince him that it was necessary for him to buy it.

I therefore made written application to the Bible Society and in a short time received instructions and stipulations, and after the acceptance followed the appointment. As of New Year 1879, I was employed as colporteur. Since I was whole-heartedly in the work, I had such good results in the distribution of the Word of God that the society soon entrusted me with a region of my own.

This turned out to be a job that at times even one's body became tired. The perspiration dripped from one's face, when one would spend the entire day with full bags, but knocked on doors in vain, and came home in the evening worn out with very little result. Yet a precious peace from God and joy would fill the heart in the evening hours as the words of our Saviour or His servants, the Apostles, filled the soul with new light, new strength. So that the following morning the scripture was fulfilled that "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," in order in Jesus' Name to go to work with full bags of books, light-footed and with renewed joy and faith.

2. God's Help Through Financial Straits

During an extended trip with the steamship on the Volga, I had ordered a fairly large supply of books to be sent to Nizhni-Nowgorod (probably 10 cases, approximately 2 Ctr.). Having arrived there, I waited probably one week beyond the time but did not receive any communication. Then I wrote to Moscow that I was traveling on and my next main stop would be (*Rybinsk a. W. ?*). There also I sold books with good results, but received neither word nor books. Since I was finished here also, and apparently the order had been forgotten or an error had been made, I made my monthly report and sent the full amount of money along, and prepared to travel on. On the day that I had set for my departure, a letter with a bill arrived in the mail, as well as a freight bill from the freight yard that 10 cases of books, ca. 20 Ctr., had arrived and were to be picked up.

What was I to do now? I had enough money to pay for my own trip and the excess baggage, but to pay for first delivering 20 Ctr. books from the railroad station to the Pristan (Steamship *comptoir ?*), and then to pay for the freight, for that I did not have enough money. Besides, there are always some unexpected expenses. The books definitely had to be moved from the railroad station to the loading dock. That was accomplished. Soon I was sitting beside my big supply of books, concerned whether or how I should proceed. I took out my Colporteur bag and sent many a prayer to God that He would make my way plain. It may have been another hour or more till the arrival of the steamship. A small group of people had already arrived, and with every minute the group increased. I walked around among the people with my bag in order to sell something. Just then the (*director, manager*) of the (*Comptoir?*) appeared, saw me and my pile of boxes, and asked what that was and where I was going. He took several copies of the New Testaments, Psalter, asked for the price, and started himself to encourage the people to buy. His offer had more effect than my words. One after another made a purchase. One would urge another to also buy a book. My book bag became empty; I had to quickly open one of the cases. The people surged forward and demanded books! The manager took the books and gave them to the people, and I was busy accepting the money! The crowd of people continued to increase, and the sale of books didn't quit. The case was probably about half empty.

Then we saw the steamship appear in the distance. The manager of the Comptoirs wiped the sweat from his forehead and said, “You will not need to pay any freight for your cases of books! We will transport them free of charge, for the cause of Christ!” He extended his hand, wished me continued success, I thanked him, and he went in the Comptoir. The steamship arrived. I quickly packed my bag full of books, put other items into the half case of books, nailed it shut, tied the cord around, and was again ready for the trip. The number of books sold was over 100 copies, and the total income was approximately 50 rubles. During the sale, I had all I could do to take the money from the individuals and to give them the change. The price of the books is always printed on the cover.

I had no fear of being cheated, because seldom or never had it happened that a Russian tried to deceive while purchasing Christian books.

In the meanwhile the steamship had arrived and docked. The captain came down into the (*Comptoir*), made his declaration, etc. Then the agent referred him to me and my books and said I was from the Bible Society, and they wanted to transport the books free of charge. “Good,” said the captain. “Just go down into the cabin. Your belongings will be taken care of.”

I thanked both individuals, and was deeply humbled over God’s unexpected guidance and help. I was quietly reminded of Peter’s draught of fishes. In 1½ hours I had sold as many books as I usually did in a week of time and work.

It is probably not necessary for me to add that I had an even more remarkable distribution on the ship.

3. The Manner and Method of Distribution on the Steamships

The most convenient and easiest kind of Bible distribution is colportage work on the steamships. The ships are big and wide, two stories high, and have up to four classes. In bad weather, one is in the cabins or under the deck, in good weather on the deck. One has all the public together. And if only the disposition of the heart is full of childlike faith and trust, if one assuredly knows with joyful trust and confident hope that the work is the Lord’s, then a good result is usually not absent. Yes, I have often experienced that the way in which I left the house, in the same way I had results.

We colporteurs on all the ships were permitted to go into all the cabins and classes to display our books and to address the people. Naturally this freedom depends on the attitude of the captain. There are few Russians who don't have a good feeling toward religion and Christianity, and approach the same with respect. It has seemed to me that in areas where they knew me, when I walked by with the books, the people would remove their caps and cross themselves.

When one has boarded a ship and made himself comfortable, whether in the 3rd class or in the 2nd class cabin, one usually rests for a while, drinks some tea, and observes the people. Yet with every stroll that one takes, one always has copies of the Holy Scriptures under one's arm or in his hands. Usually someone will ask about the books, or, if they are already familiar with them, someone will request a copy to read. If no one requests a book, one offers the first best man a book to read, but he declines. Then one immediately has the opportunity to begin a religious conversation with him, which will likely end with the man's accepting the book and later also purchasing it.

One can confidently entrust the traveling Russians with copies to read. I don't know whether I have ever missed a book in this way. Of the distributed books a goodly number are always purchased. Often religious conversations ensue with the individuals, which, since they are carried on audibly, can be overheard by the surrounding people. And usually, if the colporteur begins to speak, a little circle of listeners forms, and many a seed can be planted. When the ship arrives at a stopping place, some individuals always disembark and new ones board. At these opportunities there are always enough people on shore to whom one can offer the Holy Scriptures. So the entire day there are always new people, while when colportaging in the towns or villages, one often stands before locked doors, or one slips in the back door and is turned away by the servants, or bitten by the dogs. On the steamship one speaks to people two or three times, while in the homes, once one gets turned away, you may not appear again.

4. Arrested as a Colporteur

I have just described the pleasant side of colportage-ing on the steamers; now follows another side. Our regular tour was from Nizhni-Nowgorod to Saratoff. That took approximately four days of time, as did the return trip. Now I had one tour upstream to

Faroslawl. While I was doing colportage work in the lower deck among the third class passengers, I noticed a high-ranking police officer sitting among the people. He was (*two words I cannot recognize, but it appears to be "well-dressed and decorated"*) and had his (*policewoman or deputy. I assume it is deputy.*) with him. I thought, I need to offer him some good books as well as other people, and asked whether he would be interested in buying a Gospel or part of the Holy Scriptures. "What is this?" he asked. "Who gives you permission to sell our books? Where is your acknowledgment of legitimacy (*or credentials*)?" I told him I was sent by the Bible Society, and receive permission wherever I go, whether it is the governor, chief of police, (*do not recognize word*), or on the steamship from the captain. The officer had his assistant call the captain and asked, "Have you seen the papers for this man?" Now, of course, the captain had to request my papers. I gave him my pass and instructions from the Society. The captain naturally had nothing to criticize and was going to return the papers to me. The (*Pomoschnik ?*) took them, however, and said they would first be inspected! I was not allowed to sell another book now. I gathered the books together that I had distributed among the people to read – of course, under police surveillance, since the deputy followed me around step by step. I packed the books in the case, nailed and strapped the same under order of authority, and then wanted to converse with the people. Some of them were upset over the actions of the police officer and advised me not to pay further attention to him. Some expressed themselves in half-audible invectives, but some also believed something must not be in order since certainly no one could have anything against a person of good deeds.

The officer apparently noticed the agitation and for that reason again sent his deputy and commanded that I was not to speak to anyone. I was directed to go to the end of the ship where no one else was seated. So, I was arrested. In this condition and setting, I found myself most lonely. I examined myself whether it was for the sake of Christ that I was experiencing this humiliation or whether I had given rise to it, possibly by not having approached the officer with enough respect. I wasn't quite sure. Obviously I felt indignation in my breast, and yet peace and rest in my heart.

The officers could apparently not restrain the sailors from bringing me a bench and a table, so I could spend the day sitting there and waiting until the ship arrived in Faroslawl. This scene occurred probably between 4 and 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon. The ship was

expected to arrive in Faroslawl between 10 and 11 o'clock in the evening. The time passed slowly, but it was coming to an end. It got dark and finally one could see a streak of light in the distance. In this streak of light one could finally recognize points of light. The lights increased. The harbor of Faroslawl always came closer. The officer and his deputy came alternately to observe me. I had such an uneasy feeling, the kind a criminal would probably experience.

Now the ship began to go slower – Stop! – after which it turned around; the towing cables were thrown from the ship to the (*Pristan ?*), and pulled across, fastened, and there we lay quietly in the (*Komptoir ?*) of Faroslawl. The bridge (*gangplank ?*) was pushed up from the (*Komptoir*), and the passengers began to shove their way off the ship.

At that point the (*trill whistle*) of the police was sounded from the ship to the shore; from (*Pristan ?*) the surrounding police answered back. The police whistled again and again, and I could hear how the whistle of the quarter police was answered from the city. The passengers were not all off the ship yet when there were already some policemen from the city on deck. The officer shared with them—I don't know what kind of instructions. He took a wagon and drove to the city. Two policemen remained standing with me. Finally the ship was empty, but my belongings still lay in their place. The sailors hesitated carrying them down since I was under arrest. So the police soldiers had to pick up my book cases and my private baggage and carry it on the (*Komptoir*). I then also went from the ship onto the (*Komptoir*). Two policemen remained at my side.

The ship's captain had most likely talked to the agent (manager) of the (*Komptoir*), because the manager advised me to immediately send a telegraph to the Society. I didn't care to make the matter bigger or more complicated and did nothing. The agent directed me to a room on the (*Komptoir*) for the night. The police soldiers also walked in, but had to leave again. The agent did not allow that. Several times during the night the police came to ask me for more papers, and to question me from all directions. The last part of the night I could sleep peacefully. Psa. 4:9. You see, I also had two police servants before my door.

So the night passed, and the day dawned as I awoke. The whole incident passed over my spirit, and I became quite depressed. Yet in my heart I had rest and peace. Soon I heard the rustling and steps of the awakened police outside. I remained quiet and was united in thought with my God. When I thought it might be time for breakfast, I made more noise,

gathered up my bedding, and, having been alerted by the noise, the police appeared. Quite courteously they asked if I had any requests about breakfast or anything else. I said I wanted to have a Samowar served; I had everything else with me. It didn't take long and the Samowar was steaming. I took my tea, sugar, and baked goods out, and let the policeman bring a glass for himself to drink. The second man had left in the meanwhile. We had barely finished breakfast when the police deputy, who had arrested me, came. I was to go with him. He led me to the police station. But there he was turned away. So he went with me to another police building. After a lengthy period of waiting, a police officer came with my papers in hand, spoke a few words with the police deputy and put him down quite gruffly, and handed him my papers. I asked if I could have the papers returned to me, but couldn't quite make sense of the answer. Then the police deputy went out on the street with me. It seemed he himself didn't quite know what to do. I said if he would only give my papers back, I would be satisfied. After turning back and forth a few times, he pulled out the instructions and my pass and slowly handed them to me, turned around, and walked another direction toward the city.

Was that now the end of the song? Well, I walked to the steamship *Komptoir*, found all my belongings in order, but no policeman. I straightened out my things, and left to reserve a room. The officer who the day before had (*humiliated* ?) and arrested me, I could not find anymore. After I had everything in order again in my temporary quarters, I went to get permission from the governor and the police officer for colportage work in *Faroslawl*, and then could continue my calling unhindered.

5. **Delivered from Dogs**

Keeping dogs in the yard is no less a practice in Russia than elsewhere. That the dogs are more angry with strangers who are carrying luggage, a bag, etc., than pedestrians who are not carrying anything is just as well known. If one is also walking with a cane in his hand besides the baggage, then the dogs are fully irate. So especially when I went into the villages, I carried the colportage bag on my back or hung it on my side, and walked with my cane as a support or also, while standing, set the colportage bag on it.

If I could tell of one, I could probably tell of a hundred cases when I was uncomfortable with dogs. In this situation, though, I was suddenly overtaken by a pack dogs,

but was delivered just as quickly.

It was winter. I was colportage-ing in the German Volga colonies. It was extremely cold, and I had to work my way from one house to another through deep snow. Since the winter days are so short, I took advantage of the evenings. So the dogs would bark at me, and this time the barking progressed from one house to another till, I believe, the end of the village.

There in the moonlight I could see at the far end of the village a whole pack of barking dogs come toward me. I could not retreat in the deep snow, and the houses are locked in the evening. One has to knock or ring the door bell to gain entrance. There was no one around that I could see, and I believed in the next instant they would tear me to the ground.

“Lord, it can’t be your will that I should here be torn by dogs,” I cried. And there, directly in front of me, the front dogs turned, a snarl ensued, they started biting each other, and as quickly as they had come, they chased toward the other side of the colony. For a while I stood there trembling with excitement. I believed, and still believe, the hand of the Lord did not allow me to come between the teeth of the dogs.

6. Bibles and Testaments Burned by Catholic Priests

Among the large German settlements on both shores of the Volga, there are Lutheran Reformed as well as Catholic colonies. It is strange that no Catholic lives in the evangelical colonies, nor are there any Lutheran inhabitants in the Catholic colonies.

The English Bible Society carries the Bible in all languages and dialects, as well as in the various translations of one language. So in German, besides Luther’s translation for evangelicals, also v. Ehs and Kistemackers translation for Catholic Christians is distributed. In L. v. Eh’s. (translation) of the New Testament, there is a list of bishops who recommend the translation.

Unfortunately, the Church of Rome is so tight-hearted that in each area only books may be read that are given or recommended by the respective bishop.

On my tour at that time I had evangelical as well as Catholic colonies to visit. Before I entered a locality for distribution, I would always go to the secular government and to the preachers. The Catholic colonies were always under the respective Father or priests. Also

the locale's head was only head till the door was opened to him by the Father and he could enter.

This was not the first time that I had been to the Catholic priests and told them my assignment was to offer the books to everyone. Several times I also had reasonably good reception because also among the Romans there are always some who do not blindly obey the priests. The conversation with the Father in this colony ended with his comment that "if you go to the people, I do not believe you will sell anything." I went.

I started to contact the homes in the spiritual Father's neighborhood. When the people first saw and heard which book was being offered to them, they soon turned away, and I could either just stand there or leave. Right at the beginning, in one of the first homes on my round, a woman brought me a book cover of an Esschen Testament. "There," she said, "this part of your book we can keep." She related that, when the Father learned that they had purchased books from the colporteur, he ordered everyone to bring his book to him. Then he had torn off the covers and given them back to the persons involved. The books themselves he had thrown on a pile and ignited them.

I walked on from house to house. Everywhere they knew I was there with books. At several places they told me the same story about the burning of the books. They said, "What help are the books to us, even if they may be good, if they are taken from us and burned?" Apparently there were always some individuals who kept their books, but as the Father had said, I did not sell a single book in that area.

7. Upon Request for Discipline Follows the Rod

A year may have passed since I entered the Bible Society. On the average, I had quite good results. I was still a young Christian, a newborn child. With the greater distribution, the income had also increased. The colporteurs had agreed to give 10% of their income to the Lord's work.

With the good sales, I always had cash left over, and since in the cities one goes into the tea houses to do colportage work, I had gotten into the practice and found it enjoyable, instead of searching the scriptures in the evenings, to go to the tea houses to listen to the music and the singing. For a while I endeavored to excuse my going there on the basis of my responsibility to offer books to the guests. But soon I was coming home without having sold

anything. This went on for some time. When I took the Bible in hand after that again and felt no desire to read, and while reading experienced no blessing, no power, I came to myself and acknowledged that I had become too careless, that I had distanced myself from the leading of the Spirit of the Lord! That gave me (*soul pain – This is a direct translation*). Since an extended trip was just coming to an end at this time and I had again moved into my old permanent quarters in Saratoff, the recent past did not allow me any peace. I pled with the Lord repeatedly that He would discipline me and again fill me with more power and joy.

While I was in prayer one day (I had pulled the shades down and one or more windows were open), the mail carrier threw a letter into the room through the open window behind the shade. I was somewhat startled. As I picked up the letter and saw that it was from the Bible Society, a voice said to me, “An answer to your prayer.” Now I was afraid to open the letter. But it had to happen anyhow. The contents stated: In an order of business, the Society has determined that just as the Lord sent his disciples out two by two, the colporteurs also should work in twos, partly to support one another, to edify, or in the case of illness to help each other. As the scripture says, a double cord cannot be broken, etc.

Since Brother Bastich (*I'm not entirely sure of the exact spelling of his name in the following paragraphs*) was alone in the east, and I was colporteur on the Volga, etc., we were to work together in central Russia for the winter. And because Bastich had already worked for the Society for a number of years, and was also older, his decision in deliberations about where we were to carry on colportage work was to be valid. Acts 15:36-40.

Yes, it was an answer to my plea. Bastich was an older colporteur who had his peculiarities. I had the opportunity to spend a week together with him in Nizhni Nowgorod. Even outwardly he did not appeal to me: A pointed nose, piercing eyes, a gaunt, wrinkled face. When he spoke, he usually lifted his right index finger, or laid it on his nose. He was suspicious of himself and of others and abnormal in religious practices. For example, one afternoon before drinking tea, he had the notion to first sing a song, read a portion of scripture, and say a prayer. Or he would get up in the middle of the night to have his devotions; or he would lie down flat on the floor for prayer, and all of these practices were also to be done by the colporteur working with him. On the other hand, in the event he was refused, he had sharp and effective words, etc. In short, I had the answer to my prayer; I had received discipline, but in another manner, and probably stronger than I had wished.

Before I could leave for an undetermined period of time, I had a few items of business and some private matters to attend to.

During October I drove to Rjäsan. Rjäsan is a government town between Tamtow and Moscow.

One evening, near 11 o'clock, I arrived there and was greeted at the railroad station by Bastich.

Shortly before, there had been a heavy snowfall, and now it was so cold that the snow crunched under our feet. That was bad enough for October. Since he had already been in Rjäsan for a time, Bastich had arranged for a house that had enough room for both of us. Furnishings were soon arranged. We had to separate the books so there would be no confusion.

Now to the matter of how Bastich became a rod of discipline to me. I already mentioned some of the peculiarities above. Of course, we had to make some arrangements for housekeeping. We had the noon meal delivered, but tea, breakfast, and afternoon lunch we provided for ourselves. Since Bastich was not a practical shopper, he begged me to handle the expenditures, because he paid too much, probably was too careless about giving books away, so that at the end of the month, he was not able to send the Society the full amount, and also, instead of paying back my expenses, asked for money from me to cover his deficit with the comment: "You are carrying the bag; in that way you are recognized as Judas." I was careful not to pay him back with the same coin (*in the same way*). Our comrade relationship he referred to on the order of a prophet and his servant so that he compared himself with Elijah, his zeal with that of Elijah's zeal; I was his boy. Or Bastich was Elijah, and I was Gehazi. It is, of course, obvious that I did not always remain in that patiently enduring position. It came about on one occasion when he tried my patience by applying scripture passages to discredit me, that I grabbed him and maneuvered him into the corner of the room. Startled by my domineering move, he said he had the victory anyhow, because a Christian has to be subject in order to claim the victory.

It was difficult for him to accept when, at the end of the week, I had a larger distribution than he. So he would give away books in order to have a higher number of copies. So it happened that at the end of the month he usually did not have enough money to

balance the books. Since I, as Judas, was carrying the bag, I was supposed to cover for him with several (*Mancos* ?). Also in religious practices there was need to be an overcomer.

He said he laid down to pray in order to kiss away the dust from the feet of the Lord Jesus; my pride did not allow me to do that. I could refer to many a situation that was an example of submission to the rod of discipline (*not sure of the exact meaning here*). Although in all situations I would tell myself, “This is the discipline from the Lord that I prayed for,” I did not quite want to endure the rod. I became uncertain, discouraged, when for instance Brother Bastich at the morning or evening devotions, while reading the Bible, to which we daily devoted an hour or more, would criticize the words in my prayer, or the expression of my words while reading, even though he was born and raised in Russia and was not free of a dialect nor even sure of his grammar. How our being together came to a close in the spring of the coming year, and how the peculiarities of my Elijah proved to be an unhealthy condition under the bondage of sin will be revealed in the following chapter.

8. Healed through Prayer and Backsliding into Sin and Illness

Many of Bastich’s peculiarities aroused the feeling in me that he was not well. For instance, when Bastich had written a letter, for which he always needed much time, and had put it in an envelope, he was always unsure whether he had put the correct letter in the right envelope. When he had letters ready for the mail, he always felt the letter to make sure he had actually stamped it, and the letter was actually in the envelope; and when the information and letter had been sent, he doubted and was unsure what he had written.

Oftentimes, in good periods of time, while studying the Bible, I said to him, “Brother Bastich, you aren’t well. Your irritability, etc., is unhealthy.” My fears were confirmed.

One day we were meditating on the scripture passage in Matt. 18:15-20. We began talking about our relationship and that things were not right between us. Bastich would not leave the 19th verse. Something was weighing upon his heart. Bastich finally said, “We have here a promise from God; you are the only one to whom I can expose myself. You are the only one with whom I can pray in the name of Jesus. I will confide in you. For years I have practiced masturbation; I am doing it unconsciously at night now. Remedies are not helping me. Could we pray together for release from this burden on the basis of Matthew 18:19?” I gladly agreed. We united together in prayer: “In Jesus’ name we pray, our God and Father

would for Jesus' sake, on the basis of His Word, free Brother Bastich of his sinful ailment." We both closed with Amen! The Lord heard our prayer. After this we quietly continued our calling. One day after another passed. We respected each other. There was no friction between us as earlier. And so, a week passed. We had not mentioned the matter of the united prayer regarding Bastich. I had faith in the answer to prayer and was afraid by asking about it to bring it into question.

One evening as we were having tea together Bastich himself began to talk about his condition. He said somewhat self-consciously, "Since we prayed together, I have remained free of the evil." I now had the impression he should have remained quiet, hold fast in faith that the prayer had been heard, and thank God the Father. I could answer him little or nothing at all. The answer had been given in the Word!

Another period of one or two weeks passed. In the meanwhile there had been little occasions between us that could have led to quarreling. After this I asked him one evening as we were together, "Now, Brother Bastich, you are certainly free of your problem?" He was obviously startled and admitted that recently the evil had happened to him again a time or two. Then I felt that he had not been serious enough with himself; he should have been silent and believed.

The end of winter was near. The March sun was thawing the snow. We received orders to prepare for a trip to Siberia. That was quite nice. But to move into the distant Siberia for one or more years with Bastich, that I did not feel I could handle. I pled with God day and night to permit a change in plans. Bastich continued to become more and more forgetful; he often became tired and had to lie down, once completely discouraged, another time overwrought.

The time to leave our winter quarters neared. We wanted to spend Easter vacation in Moscow in company with the depositor there. (*Depositor – Moscow was apparently their depot, their supplier of books, and the "depositor" appeared to be the depot manager.*) The trip to Moscow with Bastich was critical. Even though I took care of the tickets, the baggage, etc., yet Bastich would forget the coach (*or wagon*), and get in the wrong one, so that I lived in fear for him.

In Moscow we had taken up living quarters in a larger guest house near the depot for about one week. Here Bastich could be himself (*or feel at home.*) Although he was behind

in his accounting and reporting, he could now allow himself enough time since we were not doing any colportage work here in Moscow. He was extremely slow at his work, and the rest of the time he was lying down. Of himself he said, Up till now he had shown himself to be the energetic Elijah; now he would be the meek and gentle John. On the trip from Rjäsan to Moscow he had lost quite a number of books. If we had to make the trip to Siberia together, we had another larger station, Kasan. There was also a depot (*distribution center*) of the Bible society, and we would have gotten ready for the trip there.

Also in Moscow I handled my things as well as Bastich's, also the railway tickets, freight, etc., to Nizhni Nowgorod. From the village of Nizhni we would go to Kasan on the steam ship. We arrived safely at Nizhni Nowgorod. There I took a (*wagon or carriage*) to the steamship (*Komptoir*). Also on the (*Pristan ?*) I took care of the tickets and baggage. Bastich was very quiet. The steam ship was already in place. We went into the 2nd class cabin and made ourselves comfortable until the ship would be set in motion. That was our time to do our colportage work. Bastich also got ready to do his colportage work. We had sailed several hours. I was in the cabin again, Bastich on the deck. I think I had lain down to get some rest. At that moment a sailor came in, shook me, and called me upstairs. There on the deck I saw a crowd of people assembled. All were looking at me. I suspected something must have happened. Bastich was lying there on the floor, with his arms outstretched. He had fallen in a state of unconsciousness. He was carried into the cabin and something was done to revive him. After some time they managed to revive him; his speech was mostly confused.

Bastich had begun to preach to the people on deck, and because of being on the ship, he used Matt. 14:22-33 how the Lord told Peter to come to him. As he was speaking so enthusiastically, Bastich jumped on the edge of the ship and wanted to jump into the water and walk on the water. As he jumped on the ship's edge, several grabbed him and pulled him back. This disturbance brought Bastich out of his rhythm. The people began to think, he has a bird in his head, e.g., he is a disturbed man. Then he got up and began to speak again, but incoherently. Suddenly he fell full-length and stiffly to the floor. That is when the sailor came and called me on deck.

Bastich remained in bed until we arrived in Kasan. That occurred early the next morning. I let my things be taken out and found the (*Depositor=warehouse manager?*),

Brother Kirsch, there on the Comptoir. We let them drive the baggage to the depot/warehouse and followed by wagon. Already on the way Kirsch had the opportunity to observe Bastich. Bastich seemed to be mentally disturbed. Having arrived at the depot/warehouse, we called for a doctor. He explained the mental disturbance was the result of masturbation. Bastich was taken to a hospital for the mentally ill. We telegraphed to Petersburg and wrote down the exact facts. Now there was no possibility of thinking of any further travel with Bastich. I stayed in Kasan for several days and visited Bastich in his room. I found him better, but physically very weak. I traveled alone up the Kama (*River*) to carry on the colportage work in Perm and to visit the iron and copper works in the Ural Mountains.

9. To the North

The warm month of May was over when I broke up in Kasan to go to Perm and from there first to travel up the Kama as far as possible.

In Perm I had very good success. But then it happened that on the first day of my colportage work I could not get finished. During those days I kept receiving new orders, and had delivered a number of Bibles and New Testaments. I had, of course, saved a sum of money, but the sale of books had no end. I was quite stiff from delivering the many books, and decided to quit for the day, even though the sun was still quite far above the horizon.

As I was sitting in my room, had ordered the Samowar and was stretching my limbs, I looked at the clock, and I could not believe my eyes. The sun was still shining into the room and was about on the horizon, but it was 10:45 in the evening, or night. Now my light went on. I was in Perm at 60° northern latitude.

After I had strengthened myself with food and drink, I soon went to bed, but could not fall asleep, because it remained daylight. Finally I did fall asleep anyhow, but then was awakened by a loud rattle. There was a fire in town. The clock showed 1:30, but it was broad daylight. It was difficult to get back to sleep.

After some time a second colporteur was sent to me. His name was Jacobson, living in St. Petersburg. By trade he was a xylographer, in German, a wood engraving worker.

We first traveled further north to Usolje up to Solikamsk. The people who lived here had not settled here of their own accord; they were banished, as also in Perm and the

surrounding area many banished had settled. They were tradespeople/merchants, as well as farmers and other tradesmen. There I found people from otherwise good families whose circumstances had gone in reverse, but the people were contented with their lot. They had warm buildings; and they had enough flour, meat and vegetables, and no needs. Other articles and fruits were brought to them with the steam ships.

Here there was actually no night during the month of June. We also got used to daylight during the night. Only we could not get used to the mosquitoes in the open. We soon turned back to the government town of Perm. In Perm we found quite a few Germans living as in every larger town in Russia. Perm prides itself on the large real Kama shore. Already from a distance, its high church spires makes quite an impression. Directly on the shore there are areas planted with trees. Terraces lead up to about 150 feet above the water where there are tables, benches, a restaurant, and a lovely view into the distance over the river, over forests, and fields. We sat in this area frequently and observed the activities on the river. We were also sitting here when the first steamer with prisoners arrived. In the next chapter I will share something about the transport of prisoners.

10. Prisoner Transports by Way of Perm to Siberia

The city of Perm, as well as the entire province, was originally a region to which prisoners were sent. Today there is hardly any difference anymore from the rest of European Russia. Presently there are no longer persons sent to Perm. The minor political offenses are punished by sending them to Semipolatsk Tomsk, Irkutsk and further punishment.

All prisoners, who are concentrated in central Russia, are shipped into Nizhni Nowgorod. From there during the summer months two prisoner steamers are sent weekly with a barge to Perm, and from Perm the ships return empty or possibly with wood/lumber for the (*Crown ?*) to Nizhni Nowgorod.

The prisoners are met in Perm by the police magistrate (?) (the highest official for the city after the governor), examined, then led to the railroad station, and from there political and petty criminals are sent by rail by way of Fekaterinburg to Tjumen. In Tjumen they transfer to the steamboat by way of Tobolsk, Omsk to Semipolatsk or to the location to which the prisoner has been assigned.

The minor criminals, thieves, arsonists, etc., begin the trip from Perm on foot. One can see long lines marching from Perm.

The political prisoners, among whom persons from the highest society and families can be found, especially students and women students, are given special treatment in Perm. At the arrival of a prisoner steamer, I observed the way things were handled.

As the steamer arrived, the police magistrate was ready and in place and, of course, the regional officers and policemen. The police magistrate went on the steamer and took the prisoners into his charge. Then rental wagons were hired, the police magistrate as well the prisoners got on and then they drove into the city to the police station. About four or five wagons packed with 5-10 persons drove singing and laughing to the police station. Apparently they were all young people, both men and women or girls; I think they were students. To them the trip to Siberia did not seem to cause any anguish yet.

The steamer pulls another ship in which are the common criminals. These usually gather in the prisoners' yard and then start their trip to Siberia on foot.

In Perm, Fekaterinburg, and other cities through which these transports come, I saw people give them money or toss it to them. When the train came through the market place, the bakers would throw them some bread, the butchers gave them a piece of meat, or those who handled fruit would give them apples.

While observing the many transports, never did I notice that the givers or the prisoners were reprimanded for taking the things offered to them even though on the sides of the trains military personnel were marching with loaded rifles. To the contrary, the soldiers would pick up money that was thrown to the prisoners and gave it to the people in chains. In the same way the soldiers would hand over bread and other food items. When we later had steady colportage work in the region of Perm, Fekaterinburg Tjumen, one day a week was regularly set aside for the colporteur to walk among the prisoners and sell books as needed, i.e., New Testaments, Psalms, or whatever they wished, or give them away if someone did not have money. Following the transport there is always quite a row of wagons on which you will find the baggage of the prisoners, and then family members, who are going with the men or fathers to Siberia, and drive behind the train. Also if someone on the march gets tired, he is put on the wagons pulled by oxen. The distance from one prisoner station to another might be between 15-25 Werst (?). The transport breaks up early and already arrives

at the next station before noon. There individual prisoners are ordered to fetch water, others to make a fire, and still others to cook the meal. I did not see what they cooked. I think rice or grits. The prisoner houses are so big that one transport does not fill them. I think provisions will have been made there also.

11. Colportage Work in the Ironworks and Copper Mines in the Ural Mountains

In the following lines I do not want to describe the ironworks or mines, but simply the colportage work itself, and what benefits were ours in nearly all the works and mines in the mountains.

I was privileged to distribute in probably more than a dozen iron works in the Ural Mountains. Therefore, if I would describe work in individual mines, I would probably get some of the information mixed up, so I will describe the method of colportage work in general.

The advantages I already noticed in Perm were the following: When there were some worthwhile things to sell to the workers, the superintendent, manager, etc., would provide a subordinate official who would go along into the various work areas and helped to recommend the item. The workers could take the Bibles, New Testaments, etc., without paying. Only the price and their names were recorded on a list. When we had gone through the entire plant, the total amount was paid out to me by the manager and later deducted from the workers' salary or wages.

The distribution was much greater because the workers did not have to pay out any money. One could pretty well expect that half of the workers would buy a copy. If perhaps up to 200 men were employed, one always had over 100 copies on the list, and that took fewer hours of time. By this method of distribution there were always fewer experiences to report. This could be attributed to the friendliness of the mine employers who paid out the necessary money for the workers. We simply laid out the books. One would encourage another to buy. It cannot be denied that the Russians in general have a respect for the Gospel for which they likely also sometimes make a sacrifice.

12. An Israelite in Whom is no Guile

This time the designation is not a man, but a woman of high society in Tamtow. In

this town is a prominent congregation of evangelical Germans. My first contact, after I had completed my passport business and received permission to carry on colportage work, was with the evangelical pastor. He said to me I should contact Mrs. X first of all. She is evangelical, the husband is a Russian in name only. It is an evangelical home. The wife is an Israelite in whom is no guile. So my next stop was then at the home of Family X.

Usually when one arrives at these large homes, one gains access only rather condescendingly through the servants, or is given no entrance at all. In the home of Family X it was different. I did go to the servant and asked if I could be announced. He called the housemaids and told them what I wanted. The girls were immediately prepared to call Mrs. X, or I could also come in with them right away. I chose the latter and walked into the house. Already in the conversation with the servant as well as with the female personnel, I was met with a courteousness/kindness and a calmness as I had never experienced anywhere before. The lady of the house appeared. When I had told her that I was a colporteur for the Bible Society and had been referred to her by Pastor N., she extended her hand and thanked me for coming. She allowed me to lay out the bag with books on a large table and started sorting through them. A number of Russian and German Testaments and Bibles she had laid back for herself. Then she said I would come back again. She would tell the servant personnel and also their children. They would also buy Testaments or Bibles for themselves. When I returned at the appointed time, the lady asked that I tell the children and the personnel how and why I had become a colporteur. In a very short time I felt at home there. She asked me to come back at an appointed time, then her husband would be at home. He had large properties and factories, had also been at the embassy in Paris. During the conversation when I was there another time, he told me how he had been in Paris for

(Unfortunately, the information comes to an abrupt halt here at the end of page 40.)

Recollections of a Bible Colporteur Continued

I had given up writing further recollections, since I was short of the necessary time to thoroughly collect my thoughts. Then I found the last continuation not as I thought I had written it, and there were sentence structures that were not like me. Also I think I needed a proof-reader.

In order to catch up on some of the demands, I will share something about Asia. To begin:

A Trip to Chiwa: Wasteland Travel with Encumbrances

My headquarters was in Taschkent.

In Taschkent, upon order of the Bible Society, I had a depot (*warehouse*), that is, I had an open business out of which Bibles, Testaments, and parts of the holy scriptures in various languages and dialects were sold and shipped out.

In time, upon order of the Society, and because of necessity, I had employed more colporteurs—two in Siberia, one in Chiwa and a young man in Taschkent as a help to my wife when I was traveling.

It came about that the colporteur in Chiwa let me know he was emigrating to America. This made the arrangement somewhat complicated because of the great distance, because the book supply was to be turned over to a newly-employed colporteur whom I did not know well. There was only one way, and that was, I had to go to Chiwa myself and regulate the situation.

Chiwa is about 1800 Werst from Taschkent. One drives from Taschkent 1000 Werst in a northwesterly direction to Korlinsk, from there in a southerly direction over the Syrdarja and about 600 Werst through the wasteland/desert Kisilkum to Alexandrowsk, from there over the Amndarja westerly to Chiwa.

For extended trips into the Steppe regions, one supplies himself with a lot of provisions. Every traveler takes tea, sugar and bread with him. For variety, I had also taken coffee and cocoa, also lemons, ham, cheese, etc. Provided with Kaseonaja Podoroschnaja (a ticket with the postal delivery service that officials of the Crown receive), I left Taschkent with a small supply of books.

It was not the first trip I had taken with the postal service, for I had already been in Taschkent for three years, and, if possible, I was to make two tours annually, which each took about three months of time.

I stated above that I had been provided with a ticket for officials of the Crown. This preferential treatment was granted to me for every lengthy trip. The top officials were familiar with our Bible Society, since I had mostly given out gratis copies to hospitals, poor schools, and prisons. The government considered our work as a mission, and to carry out our work in a safer and more efficient manner, they gave us papers of an official. Provided with these papers, upon arriving at a station, they had to immediately hitch up fresh horses if one did not want to rest or spend the night. When one had a regular postal travel ticket, they often had to wait several days for horses. In the early days of my travels, once, on a stretch of 300 Werst, I had to be enroute 13 days that I later always covered in 30 hours, because I had to wait two or three days for horses at some stations. This inconvenience was lifted with the Kaseonaja Podoroschnaja.

I will assume I am traveling with the Troika (?). The pole-horse is running along at a steady trot; also the short gallop of the two (*jumper/leapers = horses*) keep pace to the steady clanging of the bells in the (*arch, or bow*) above the pole-horse. And, since I have been giving my thoughts free course, the measured clanging of the bells soon develops into a short, continuously repeated rhythm.

We have already traveled quite a stretch, have passed five stations, and now the (*Zämtschnik, I assume the driver*) stops on a hill in order to place the (*Hemmschuh = brakes, skids ?*) under the wagon. We have a long stretch of several Werst to drive down a steep hill. Far below in the distance, one can see the white station building. Carefully the horses go down the steep hill. The strong pole-horse controls the entire (*vehicle or coach*) with his might, so that the brakes would hardly have been necessary. But not long ago, a Postwagon tipped over here in which a mother and daughter were taking a trip to visit their home. The girl had jumped out, but the mother remained under the wagon, and when the horses came to a halt, the mother had been dragged to her death. The daughter lost her sanity over this.

I regularly pay the driver a tip and, as a result, usually get fairly good horses.

We have again driven a couple of stations, about 30 Werst, and stop again on a hill where the brakes are to be put on. Below us lies the town of Tschimkent. As far as the eye can see it is green, trees, gardens. Now and then a small white house cheerfully peeks out through the totally green landscape. Below to the right, a tall factory chimney reaches upward.

Gradually we arrive at the bottom. The brake shoes are released and in a wild gallop with the shrill clanging of the bell, we arrive in town through the marketplace. Chickens fly, and calves, sheep and donkeys shy to the side. In full gallop we careen through the streets till we are in front of the postal building. With one jolt the driver comes to a halt and the horses are standing. Because of this sudden halt people have already been involuntarily thrown out of the wagon into the air.

I stay for a few hours of rest, have ordered a Samowar (tea maker), and for variety have ordered a fried chicken. After my physical needs are met, and in the station house a few copies of the Holy Scriptures have been accepted, we take off again with a fresh start. I want to be in Kaselinsk as quickly as possible, because from there one has to plan for another 12-20 days for the wasteland/desert trip.

Beyond Tschimkent, Turkestan and Fort Parowsk are worth seeing. The other towns are very small and the landscape quite monotonous. Yellow-gray is the road, yellow-gray are the low (*limestone ?*) houses of the inhabitants. Yellow-gray are the camels that we often see individually or striding in long caravans as we rush by them. Yellow-gray is also the clothing of the camel driver as well as the Mohammedan man we meet.

A few stations before Kasalinsk driving is difficult and heavy. We drove through deep, loose sand. The sun burned down from above while the hot sand from beneath helped to heat the atmosphere. The horses can only move forward on these stretches at a walking pace. They foam and breathe heavily from exhaustion and the heat, and have to stop repeatedly to snort.

The First Attempt

As a young man and assistant at one of the better grocery and drapery (?) businesses in Danzig, I enjoyed very much going to the theater and opera, and when time allowed, I read plays and drama, with special preference for Schiller and Göthe. And so it happened that my interest was diverted from the business toward books. I fully recognized that my place was not in business but my abilities could be better used in the area of books, and I endeavored to find employment as soon as possible in the theater. For this purpose I spent the greater part of my time to learn several roles in plays, as well as to sing. It occurred that while I was in the warehouse and was occupied with declamation or singing scales, someone from the business would catch me unawares.

At first only one of the young people was aware of my future plans, but that could not remain quiet for long. My singing and declamation practices occurred oftener, all the personnel knew of it, nor did I keep it a secret. It was painful for me when several times the manager of the business himself surprised me as I was singing scales and practicing declamation roles. My work at the business was, of course, a full-time job, to put out the wares and bring them to the store, as well as keeping the store in order.

I need not mention that in the last period of time there was some negligence.

I had become acquainted with an old Mr. Schmechel

(The rest of the information is not apparently available.)