

Mrs. Rike Flemmer of Glückstal

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[Translator's Note: An account of a woman who used her self-education knowledge of medicine to give medical assistance to her community. Comments in square brackets are those of the translator.]

[Begin Translation]

Aunt Rike (*Das Rickebäsle*)

by Miss Anna Schrenk, Korntal

Remembrance Page for Our Dear Mrs. Flemmer in Glückstal

It is not very often that one comes across such a woman, whose biography I want to portray here, with rich gifts of understanding, with an unselfish heart, which she puts into the service of her fellow human beings and so is able to be a blessing for many. I want to dedicate the remainder to this page to her, in thankful remembrance of what this woman was even in our house.

Her cradle stood in a German colonist house, in South Russia, in the colony of Glückstal, Tiraspol District (*Kreis*). *Rickele's* [this might be an endearing name for Margaretha] parents had migrated from Swabia, along with many of their fellow countrymen, at the beginning of the 19th century. Her mother was probably born there, too, at least she told her little daughter much about the Swabian homeland and planted in her the same love for it. It must have been an exceptional woman, the mother of little *Rickele*, who carefully trained her only little daughter, but did not spoil her. As simple and modest life also ran its course for the German colonists in those days, so *Rickele* had had various stimulations for her receptive mind, since many travelers, mostly Russian officials in the course of their duties, made her house their stop-over place. So there was the time when a military doctor came to the house of *Rickele's* parents, whether for a short or longer time I do not recall any longer, but, in any case, the now grown-up daughter had picked up and observed from him the first medicinal knowledge and knack, which she later used as a blessing to so many of her suffering fellow human beings. *Rickele* got married at a pretty young age to Michael Flemmer, the son of a respectable colonist and the young couple now moved into the house of the now widowed mother. Unfortunately, she died soon after that, but, even into her senior years, she spoke with great love and respect about the mother. After her death, the daughter began more than ever to procure and grow in the spiritual heritage of the mother. Known as *Rickele*, she soon became known as "Aunt Rike" (*Rickebäsle*) by the whole village, from whom the old and the young received their advice and assistance in all kinds of dire straits. Yes, Aunt Rike was known throughout the boundary of our colony. If there was a Russian holiday, as many as 20 or more Russian wagons stood in front of the Flemmer's house,

people looking for help from Aunt Rike. She had advice for every injury and gave it in the kindest way. With a sure hand, she set hundreds of broken and dislocated bones and some of the many who had eye ailments, which existed among us in the summer, had her to thank that they kept their sight. (Without hesitation, she got all her recipes from the pharmacy in Grigoriopol) So many young mothers have her to thank that at the birth of their little child it stayed alive. The woman was a faithful helper in time of need also in our house when the distant Semstwo doctor was sent for only in urgent cases and on her advice.

Aunt Rike also experienced many joys and sorrows in her own family, yes, mostly the latter one. Ten sons were born to the couple, but five died not long after they grew up. One got married young and another was allowed by his nurse, as a still tender child, to fall off the table and, as a result, got brain damage which inhibited his mental development so much so that he became a physical and mental cripple. His death was a release both for him and for the family, but infirmities and deaths of the four other flowering sons were a great sorrow for the parents, especially for the sensitive heart of a mother. Four daughters-in-law also died at a young age. But, as a convinced Christian, she took all her suffering as from God's hand and bore them quietly and bravely without complaining.

But a lot of joy was given to her through her sons, especially the third one who became the future Dr. Flemmer, who, like his mother, was able to be a blessing to his countrymen. As a particularly gifted child, through the intermediary efforts of the former local pastor Kerm, he attended secondary school (*Gymnasium*) in Kischinev and was received into the house of a sympathetic lady who gave him motherly attention throughout his whole time in school and even later on. That was a great relief for the parents (around 1875), especially for the mother for whom it was difficult to have to let go from her hands her child at such a young age. But it was just through this son that she also experienced her greatest joy because, afterwards, he became an efficient and respectable doctor in his home area and later was able to work in Odessa. Unfortunately, I was no longer in the picture of Aunt Rike's last years of life because we left Glückstal in 1902, but, after a two year stay in the German homeland, returned again to Russia, but then came to Grossliebental. We saw each other now and again and exchanged letters, but I do not have any knowledge about the more detailed circumstances of her life.

However, it was comforting to know that she did not have to experience the misery of Bolshevism. God took her away before then. But we keep her in grateful memory, as no doubt are many others during their life-time.

[End of Translation]