

German Literature in Bessarabia 08—Antonie Häußer

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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: The poetry is given in the original German so that the reader can understand the rhyming which is difficult to reproduce in English. Comments in square brackets in the document are those of the translator.]

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[Translation Begins]

Antonie Häußer. (—t)

a) Herbst

Leidvoll Zagen . . .
Schaurig Klagen, . . .
Denn der Herbst beginnt.

Banges Sehnen . . .
Wimmernd Stöhnen
Seufzet durch den Wind.

Blätter fallen . . .
Nebel wallen . . .
Streben ahnt die Welt.

Leises Weinen

a) Autumn

Sorrowful hesitation . . .
Terrible complaints, . . .
When autumn begins.

Anxious longing . . .
Whimpering moans
Sigh through the wind.

Leaves fall . . .
Fog drifting . . .
Striving senses the world.

Soft weeping

*Zwischen Bäumen . . .
Still, wirst auch gefällt!*

Between trees . . .
Quiet, will also be pleased!

[The word *Glück* has several English words to refer to it. What to select for the English translation of this word? Luck, Fortune, Good Luck, Success, Prosperity, Happiness, Fate, Chance. I opted for **Good Fortune**. The reader can decide whether another word could have been used and then think it whenever the word *Good Fortune* shows up.]

b) Prince Hartwig Seeks Good Fortune. A fairy tale.

“Good fortune (*Glück*)?” “My good fortune?” Was Prince Hartwig allowed to use these words? He who suffered so much for the sake of these two words! How did he even come to think again and again of these two small, but nevertheless so very serious words, to chase after them? — “Good fortune?!” — “My good fortune?!” — Did he know it, this wondrous reality? No, no, — he did not know it. — Or maybe he knew it after all? Yes, yes, he knew good fortune very well! Yes, yes, that also means knowing--knowing good fortune with the greatest torment, the most burning pain, the deepest confusion in the chest! Yes, yes! Prince Hartwig knew good fortune well! It was often very close to him, the good fortune, but he was never allowed to grasp it with his strong hands, he was never allowed to feel comfortable with it, it never wrapped him in his rosy make-beliefs. — Prince Hartwig found good fortune in his last breath, back when his soul tore itself away from the tortured body, back then, when the tired body had finally done battle, then Prince Hartwig found good fortune.

Once upon a time there were two kings: one was called Eberhard and the other—Arnulf. The two had been feuding for a long time. They fought each other over every little thing. It happened not only once that brave warriors on both sides soaked the earth with their blood or gave life for their king. But as often as they made peace, so often one or the other found a reason to declare war again.

Once King Arnulf besieged the castle of King Eberhard. Hot battles had already been fought; but King Eberhard sat firmly in his castle, and no power brought him out. King Arnulf knew that his army was weakened by the hardships of war. Therefore, he wanted to take the castle of his greatest enemy, King Eberhard, with slyness. He sent his only son Hartwig as a spy to the castle of Eberhard.

Prince Hartwig put on simple war clothes, then crept around the rocks of the enemy’s castle to see if he could find a secret door. But he searched in vain. He took a trumpet and announced his arrival at the gate. King Eberhard immediately let the newcomer come into the castle and to him, because he wanted to know what message the stranger was bringing.

But Prince Hartwig said: “Great King Eberhard, Kings Armin and Manfred are allowing to be said to you: We know that you are in great distress. Hold on to the castle for another 40 days, then we will come to your aid. Your hereditary enemy will be beaten.” King Eberhard rejoiced in the loyalty of Kings Armin and Manfred. He therefore had the supposed emissary of the kings entertained in the best possible way.

Prince Hartwig stayed in the castle for 20 days under a false name. These 20 days were to seal his fate.

After Prince Hartwig had strengthened himself with food and drink, he went out to the mercenaries (*Kriegsknechten*). They led him around the castle and showed him the war material and—an underground passage through which one could get outside. Prince Hartwig felt his way through the castle with eagle eyes.

The next day he came to a tower. The tower did not seem to be inhabited. There was dead silence up there.

Prince Hartwig opened an iron door and stopped as if rooted to the ground. A lovely picture presented itself to him: a girl, in a long white dress, blond curly hair, light and slim as a lily, stood between two beds. On the beds lay two seriously wounded. The girl was putting a bandage around the forehead of one man of war.

“What do you want, stranger?” she exclaimed, frightened, when she saw the prince. “I have been a guest of King Eberhard for two days. I was bored, strolled through the castle and found this tower.” “Come in, young man,” said the girl in a sweet voice. “Who are you?” she then asked. “My name is Hartwig,” confessed the prince. for he could no longer lie to this pure child, and his eyes rested with pleasure on the slender, delicate figure. “And who are you?” asked Prince Hartwig. — “I am Irmtraut, the daughter of King Eberhard.” Prince Hartwig was alarmed when he heard this. — “And from this angel will I take the castle, for father?” Prince Hartwig asked himself.

During these 20 days, the two human children became very fond of each other. They swore eternal love and loyalty to each other. But Irmtraut did not know who Hartwig was.

When Prince Hartwig came to his father’s camp, he lied: “Great king, dear father! I was in the castle of King Eberhard. But this castle is so fortified and so strongly built that it is impossible to capture. And he has such a large number of mercenaries that we must be defeated.” — King Arnulf stamped his foot in anger. But he went home. Prince Hartwig rejoiced inwardly that he did not have to harm his dear girl.

But when evening came, Prince Hartwig crept in front of the castle of Eberhard. And Irmtraut stepped through the secret door of the castle, wrapped in the cloak of the night. This went on for three months.

One day the prince put on his war garment, took his shield and spear and rode to front of the castle of King Eberhard. The horns announced the strange rider. When Irmtraut recognized the stranger, she ran towards him and cried out full of fear: “Hartwig, you are coming by day?” — “Hush, dear Irmtraut, I want to go to your father,” he comforted.

“What do you want, stranger?” asked the king. Hartwig replied: “Great king, give me your daughter as a wife. We have been in love for three months. Great King, bless us then.”

“Who are you, stranger, who dares to take the daughter of King Eberhard?” “I am Hartwig, the son of King Arnulf.”

Dead silence after these words. King Eberhard cried out wildly: “Aha, the son of my enemy! Put him in chains! Lock him up in the deepest dungeon!”

Irmtraut turned pale when she heard who her lover really was. But when her father’s command reached her ears, she threw herself painfully between her lover and the mercenaries. She clutched the feet of her angry father, and in hot tears she interceded for her lover. — After several days, King Eberhard had compassion for his daughter. He let Hartwig come up from the dungeon and said to him with resentment:

“Thank the tears of my daughter that you are standing here with all your limbs. — Your father and his whole clan are my greatest enemies. Therefore, I cannot allow you to take my daughter. But because I love my only child with all my heart, I do not want to stand in the way of our desire. But I will require a condition for you: Prince Hartwig, search for good fortune and you shall have my daughter as your wife!”

And Prince Hartwig set out to search for good fortune. He crossed the world from north to south, from east to west. But behind him followed, as an echo, the spiteful laughter of the world. “Are you looking for good fortune? Good fortune? Go home, you fool, good fortune, you won’t find it!” But he was not discouraged. He, Prince Hartwig, had courage, great courage, but even greater love for his Irmtraut. And that did not allow him to despair. And that made him strong, it did not allow him to be robbed of hope, although he was ridiculed and laughed at. — He wandered into the cities. He read the faces of the townspeople, looked into the opening of the windows. But wherever he looked: distress, misery, sorrow, hatred, envy; everything sneered into his face with hollow eyes, pale cheeks, shaking knees, snarling, gnashing teeth. Walls smiled pityingly after the wanderer. Now he knew: Here, in the city, good fortune did not live. Here it could not rest at all. Here, Prince Hartwig could not even look into the golden sun with smiling eyes, the donor of all life. Here he was not allowed to kiss Mother Earth full of blissful good fortune. — Irmtraut is waiting! — Only onward! Onward! Always farther! Leave this place with hurrying feet! — Irmtraut is waiting! — And thunderous laughter followed. No, it was a roar, moaning screams, snarls, whimpers. His heart shook with all the misery.

He came to a quiet, peaceful babbling brook. Cheerful flowers lined the bank, delightful grasses stretched their heads into the sun-soaked pleasure, crickets chirped, bees hummed, birds twittered. Then Hartwig’s heart opened wide. Deeply he absorbed the lukewarm pleasure. His eyes were gleaming. He knelt down, spreading his arms, to kiss the earth for joy. — “Here I must find good fortune,” he said. — Irmtraut is waiting! Now his eyes met again the flowers standing in tears: they wept, they had suffering, sorrow. Now he also heard that the birds were singing mourning songs. — And Prince Hartwig lowered his head deep, deep to his chest. — And Irmtraut is waiting! — Again fate drives him on, again he rejoiced too soon. Will he still persevere for a long time? Will he look courageously into the future for a long time to come? Will he carry a joyful hope in his chest for a long time to come? And Irmtraut is waiting at home! Waiting? Is she really waiting? She has not received any news from him for almost a year! — Or is she even allowed to wait? Will not her father force her to marry someone else?

Or did he only seek cause to chase the hated enemy from the vicinity of his child? So Hartwig tortured his brain with a thousand questions to which he received no answer. This uncertainty agonized, tore away at his heart. — So onward! Onward, — just leave this place! Do not lose a second! Do not miss a moment! Do not rest for a minute too long! Perhaps it depends precisely on this minute that good fortune escapes me, that I stand empty-handed again, that I have to wander again, search — must search! Yes, searching, always only searching, — searching until the world ends, searching until the heart stands still! Search! Search! Search, until—till I can lay the good fortune with white wings at the feet of King Eberhard, that he can crown with it the noble forehead of Irmtraut. — — — That will then be a joy! My heart will burst with pleasure! Rosy clouds will envelop us, and — the world will be swallowed up for us! And in this pleasure I will drink eternity from the eyes of Irmtraut! Forever, good fortune will weave us into its veil of clouds! — So tormented, Prince Hartwig encouraged himself in this way! So he dreamed with open eyes. In anticipation of this good fortune, he uttered a cry that all nature would awaken from it.

And he rushed along farther and farther. As if in flight, he roamed hundreds of miles of land. Nowhere did he find peace. Nowhere did the sun shine as golden as Irmtraut. Nowhere did the shadow invite him to rest as kindly as at the castle of Eberhard. Nowhere did the darkness of the night rumble so intimately as when Irmtraut stepped out of the secret gate of the castle. — Nowhere did he find good fortune! His star of hope hid behind the setting moon, his courage crept shamefully into the hot desert sands. — “Prince Hartwig!!” howled the desert storm through his marrow and leg. “Prince Hartwig!!! — Irmtraut is really still waiting!”

And he sought good fortune in a vast desert. Here in this frightening loneliness, here in this infinity, in this sea of sand and stones it can be buried, here it may have been abducted by a deserter, an envious person. And Prince Hartwig toiled into the night. He no longer felt how the hot desert embers wasted him, how the burning sand burrowed into all pores, how the hyena crept around him, until hunger and thirst dragged his parched body into the sand. He always kept on searching and searching for good fortune! His eyes are almost blinded by the bright sunlight.

He is all alone in the wilderness—and it is night. His tired body sinks into a restless sleep. Around midnight, Hartwig hears a noise and scream, a hiss and snort, a roar and weather, a curse and howl, as if the world were ending. Before Hartwig could really think, a ghost caravan was near him, he was caught by it, and with a sense-confusing noise the retinue rushed through the air. — After a horrible, unspeakable time, the prince felt a grip under his feet. He knew that he was back on the earth. There was the deepest darkness around him. He was sad, despondent. He groped back and forth in the darkness. He was too impatient to allow himself rest: “When? When? Good fortune! Oh, when will I finally find you?” he cried despondently. And he kept groping. Soon he bumped his confused head here, soon there. Finally, he became quite apathetic, his soul life was already half dead. He groped and wandered mechanically, desolate, hopeless, hardened and tormented into the night, into despair. How long did he lose his way like this? He did not know: he only knew that he was miserable. — Irmtraut! — Irmtraut?

Suddenly he saw a very bright shiny glow. “Is it good fortune?” he could still think. In his dullness, however, he did not rush in joyful upsurge towards the apparent brightness of good

fortune. No, quite mechanically he moved towards the beam of light. — Now the brightness is already very close, a few more steps. It really is the good fortune that lies ahead of him. A faint ray of hope crept into his chest. Courage also bashfully slipped up to him again. He felt his arms stronger. He boldly approached good fortune, but it hopped teasingly further on a green silk carpet. Embittered by this teasing game, Hartwig wanted to snatch good fortune to himself by force. — He gathered all his strength and ran after good fortune. But when he wanted to seize it, he came into a swamp and sank. — “Irmtraut! Dear, dear Irmtraut! It has happened to me!” cried his last struggling strength... And the night cried her pain into the air and took the whimpering, plaintive moans of the sinking Hartwig to the clouds and carried it to the shining stars.

The stars descended with teary eyes, the last time to kiss the one who had become more and more cut off from society. — As the suffering went to the stars, no one on earth could hear it. But there was someone there who heard the scream. A tender portion of grass stretched out its neck from the swamp. Sympathetically it spoke: “Just take courage, dear Hartwig, I want to help you out!” And a tiny gray firefly heard it too. That said, “And I will carry my lantern before you, that you may not stray from the path.”

Prince Hartwig was saved. He stretched out his tired limbs under a tree. The strength left him completely. Then he felt a mild breeze blowing around his body. A soft golden haze descended to him. He became so light, so well, so quiet in his chest. He felt no longing, no hope. A rosy light opened his eyes. What ecstasy! A trickling joy ran through his body: he looked into the eyes — Irmtraut! “This is heaven! That is good fortune!” he thought. He spread his arms wide to absorb all the good fortune.

At that moment, people were crying at the castle of Eberhard: Irmtraut died out of love and longing for Hartwig.

But King Eberhard cried out in his great pain: “O Arnulf, if your son had not come, I would still have my daughter!”

King Arnulf often sent messengers to look for his son. The next morning they found him lying under the tree with a smiling, beaming face.

A servant reported to King Arnulf: “Great king, your son is dead!” Wild with anger and pain, King Arnulf stomped. “You should pay me for that, treacherous Eberhard!”

And both swore terrible revenge. — Insanity was mobilized. A terrible war broke out like none ever before. King Eberhard and all his mercenaries were killed. On the other side, only King Arnulf was still alive. He leaned under the tree where Hartwig had died and said dying: “I am avenged!”

Now, what good was all the toiling and plagues, the worrying, the saving, the piling up? What was the use of all the running and chasing, the pursuit of wealth, fame and good fortune? — What remained of the great love, all the seeing, the hope? — — — Rubble! Chaos! a — Nothing!

c) Müde Greise

*Müde Greise
Wandern leise
Hungernd öden Weg.*

*Rufet, Glocken!!
Eis'ge Flocken
Decken Flur und Steg.*

*Grimm'gen Winters Wille
Sanfte Friedensstille
Schnee als Leichentuch*

c) Tired Old Man

Tired old man
Hiking quietly
Starving barren way.

Call, bells!!
Icy flakes
Covering meadow and footpath.

Grim winter's will
Gentle peaceful silence
Snow as a shroud

d) Gott

*Gott aller Götter! Erhaben allmächtig und groß!
O, klein bin ich, elend und niedrig bloß!
Thronst über Himmeln, du Ewiger, unendlich fern...
Tief wurzelst auf unsrem unseligen Stern.*

God of all gods! Exalted Almighty and Great!
Oh, I am small, nothing but miserable and lowly!
Enthroned beyond heavens, you Eternal, Infinitely Distant...
Deeply rooted on our unfortunate star.

*Gott, die Gerechtigkeit, Weisheit und Güte du bist!
Ob ich es erfasse, ich elender Christ?
Magst dich nur zürnend abwenden, Zermalmer, von mir —
Treu bin, unergründliches Wesen, ich dir.*

God, you are Righteousness, Wisdom and Goodness!
Will I grasp it, I a wretched Christian?
May you only turn away from me in anger, Crusher—
I am faithful to you, Unfathomable Being.

*Gott! Irr, zermartert, voll Zweitracht ist meine Seele —
O, Gott, mein Gott! meid mich, du ewige Helle!
Träum ich?! Trost spendend in meiner zermalmenden Not,
Trittst du, Unerforschlicher, zu mir! Gott? — Gott!*

God! My soul is perplexed, tormented, full of discord —
Oh, God, my God! Flee from me, you Eternal Brightness!
Am I dreaming?! Comforting in my down-cast need,
Come to me, Incomprehensible! God? — God!

[Translation Ends]