

Agronomist Gavel's Biography of Johann Cornies (1789-1848)

Supplement to the *Unterhaltungsblatt* (October 1848)

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Johann Cornies was born on June 20, 1789, not far from Danzig in West Prussia. Cornies' father was an active and experienced man who had, in his youth, travelled to many countries as a sailor. In his later years he devoted himself to innkeeping rather than agriculture. The senior Cornies was able to provide his children with an education appropriate to their estate. This was possible in the small town of Mühlhausen, the family's last place of residence in Prussia.

The eldest son, Johann Cornies, was talented and studious. At the school in Mühlhausen, he was able to acquire much knowledge which would prove of great benefit to him in his later professional life. In 1804, when Johann was 16, he emigrated to Southern Russia with his parents. Soon after arriving in the Khortitsa settlement district, the young Cornies, under the supervision of his aged father, took over the direction of the distillery. Cornies, already at this time, took the opportunity to familiarize himself with the state of affairs in the local Mennonite colonies. After the settlement of the Cornies family along the Molochna in the year 1806, we have the beginning of the real life-story of the deceased, a life of continuous development in creative work.

If one is to make an accurate judgement about the productive activities of the deceased, it is necessary first to examine his private and domestic life before turning to his activities in the external world.

Let the departed speak to us himself through one of his own letters. In 1823, at the time of his most vigorous activity as plenipotentiary of the Molochna Mennonite community, he wrote these words to a friend: "I have no choice but to work to the very limits of my capacity while the day is still here, for the night is surely coming when no man can labour. I do

not rely on anyone else, nor do I allow myself to be influenced by the slander of those who think differently. For I place my trust solely in God my Saviour. At this very moment each one of us has the opportunity to accomplish a great deal, for the time is ripe. But we must not do so coldly, nor tepidly, but for all that we are worth, and that in God's name."

In times of sorrow as in times of joy, Cornies was always able to maintain his composure and independence. Again, the truth of this statement can be confirmed by the words of the deceased himself. During the terrible blizzard of the winter of 1824 to 1825, Cornies, like many other agriculturalists of his area, suffered great losses, in his case, of 800 sheep and 200 horses. Yet in a letter dating from that time, the lamented was able to express himself on the matter in the following way; "The Lord has made me, among many others, feel the pain of his rod. My livestock did not die of hunger, to be sure, which is why I feel no inner turmoil. Yet I ask myself seriously, did I do all that I might have done to protect what had been entrusted to my keeping and for which, in due course, I must give account. God does not always give us what we wish. He does, however, give us what is to our benefit. And for this reason I am deeply grateful and at peace and am now working again, and with greater care, to the glory of God. My energies are not directed mainly to pursuing a livelihood. I feel called upon much more to make myself useful to my fellowman."

In Prussia, from where Cornies had come, there were no communities consisting exclusively of Mennonites. The Mennonites live there individually, scattered among other confessions. What Cornies encountered in Southern Russia, however, an independent, self-contained Mennonite community, vested with rights, surpassed his most sanguine hopes and expectations. And so this spirited young man, who now belonged to such a community, was, from his earliest youth, animated by the desire to contribute to its development and well-being.

If we are to understand how this man was able to accomplish so much, we must, in addition to noting the qualities of spirit just described, mention others as well. The high level of his spiritual character and faith is most clearly evidenced in the tolerance he showed in matters of religion. He was, moreover, a kind-hearted man, well-disposed toward everyone he met. He was prepared quickly to forget wrongs that he had suffered. He also discharged responsibilities punctually and kept every promise that he had made. In pursuing what he regarded to be good and useful he revealed steadfastness, a love of order and great perseverance. These admirable qualities were joined with others in a harmonious whole. He was adept at overseeing a situation quickly and comprehending concrete circumstances fully. He possessed an exceptional memory, was full of profound insights, and was so curious and desirous of knowledge that matters worthy of exploitation rarely escaped his attention. The

departed was filled with a genuine desire to probe matters and circumstances which might contribute to the joy and independence of his fellowmen.

Cornies worked without ceasing from morning to night, and was only fully at ease when he was providing his brethern and fellowmen with guidance and direction. Cornies hated idleness, and for this reason nothing caused him greater annoyance than an attitude of indifference toward one's duty or professional responsibility. If dereliction of duty of this kind by equals and subordinates incurred his displeasure, he was even more infuriated when he saw such indifference among officials regarding their formal responsibilities.

The deceased was always chary in his praise of others. He was more inclined to reproach others, but for all this nevertheless showed real esteem for the accomplishments of others. And he freely gave unconditional trust to subordinates who were able to demonstrate good will, diligence and a love of order.

The deceased had an uncommon gift with words. His speech was always persuasive and made a lasting impression on those who came into closer contact with him. Cornies was able to gain power and influence over others through the force of his zeal on behalf of useful objectives, a clear and lively mind, striking words, fitting examples and a unique and compelling way of reasoning.

Cornies responded with sincerity, openness and love to everyone who sought his acquaintance, help or advice, whether they were of high or of low rank. Each individual felt himself drawn to Cornies, who nevertheless succeeded in asserting his intellectual superiority in an extraordinary way. He was able to lead many of his fellows who had gone astray back onto the right path through no means other than the force of his speech.

Through such persuasiveness he exerted a positive influence not only over his own brethern and German countrymen but on all peoples and religious groups that lived in his environs, equally upon Nogais, Russians, Jews, Doukhobours and Molokans. To be able to guide all of these people gradually toward a more elevated civilization was for him a source of the greatest joy and pleasure. He had taken as his life's task the obligation of helping and instructing, by word and by deed, everywhere and to the extent that he was able.

A further noteworthy trait contributed much to ensuring that almost all of his undertakings were crowned with the greatest success. Before Cornies set out directly to realize one of his larger designs he would carry the idea of it around with him for many years. First he would make the necessary preparations. He anticipated obstacles and only after removing these first, and when all was ready, would he suddenly initiate

an undertaking. It thus appeared that all of his undertakings were accompanied by great good luck and fortune. The brother of the deceased told how he always sensed when a larger project was taking shape. One could, he said, observe his brother making various arrangements and accommodations without, however, letting on what they were meant to achieve.

In consequence of this approach, Cornies was able to make decisions quickly in respect to larger undertakings, but without acting precipitously. Once the deceased had begun a venture he pursued it with great perseverance and mental concentration. In all that he undertook he achieved mastery down to the minutest detail, without, however, losing sight of the larger whole.

All of these admirable qualities of the heart and of the mind, coupled with an ardent desire to accomplish much good, inevitably resulted in the completion of many outstanding ventures. Yet much of what he planted will come to fruition only in the future.

A peculiarity, one might call it an endearing quality of Cornies, was to insist that only self-produced goods be consumed in his household.

Cornies was able to indulge unaffectedly and with great joy in harmless pleasures. He recognized and he treasured the quiet, common, daily pleasures of life, and for this reason his demeanour was almost always cheerful and buoyant. Agriculture, too, was for him not merely an avenue to prosperity but the source of his most genuine and sublime pleasure. He was truly a friend of nature with the uncanny ability of eliciting many of its most profound secrets. Even as he was able to achieve influence over people with whom he came in contact, so also was he able, as a first-rate agriculturalist, to compell the earth itself to acknowledge his power and mastery. This he achieved through reflection and great industry and perseverance.

Cornies lived simply and austere and disliked every display of ostentation. Despite his generous hospitality, he was not fond of larger social gatherings. Nor did he travel about visiting, and even his own brothers saw him at their homes only for short periods of time.

In wintertime, after the day's work had been completed, he would gather with a circle of friends for tea. On such occasions the deceased was a highly engaging and animated story-teller. There was never, in this circle, an absence of lively and instructive conversation during which Cornies, an ardent smoker, kept his pipe always aglow. In this circle of friends he often repeated the watchword of his career. "We are," he said, "neither innovators nor advocates of the old. The middle way is the best way." He wrote much as well, and a number of instructive articles by him on agriculture have been published and are widely read. It was usually late at night, when interruptions were no longer to be feared, that he

turned to reading or writing. He was, moreover, fluent and expressed himself effectively in the Low German, his mother tongue. He treasured this language and loved it dearly, and if he observed that one of his fellows was ashamed of the Low German he could become very angry.

Cornies had many intimate friends among the Mennonites. But he also had many antagonists, and this could simply not be helped. For every struggle, including efforts for the well-being of one's fellowman, gives rise to opponents. The deceased was a brave warrior in pursuit of laudable goals. He was ready at all times to declare war on anyone who opposed his efforts to further the good. In all of this, Cornies' bosom friend and supporter was the churchman Peter Neufeld of Orlov. This faithful companion never left Cornies' side, even in times of sorrow or when illness beclouded the otherwise clear mind of the deceased. Another noteworthy intimate of the departed was the present head of the district, Toews. Especially in Cornies' activities as Chairman of the Agricultural Commission, Toews supported him strongly. Indeed it was this companion, above all others, who was able to enter fully into Cornies' thoughts and intentions.

These three men, through their united action, were able to achieve what would have been impossible for each one of them individually.

In 1811, at the age of 22, Cornies married. His life's partner stood faithfully at Cornies' side as a worthy housewife and loving mother of his two children until she died one year before his own passing.

Before the death of his wife, Cornies' only son journeyed abroad and chose his present spouse. Thereupon Cornies decided that he would permit his only daughter and his most worthy son-in-law to attend his son's wedding in Prussia, however difficult such separation might be. His children will certainly never forget the pain of that moment of parting.

On February 29 of this year Cornies became ill in consequence of a serious cold which was complicated by a swelling in his throat that constricted his chest. He died peacefully in the arms of his brother David Cornies on March 13, regrettably in the absence of his children, who were still in Prussia. Cornies' last days were passed in solemn quietness, without complaining. As his death approached he did not request the assistance of anyone, but simply, with great indifference, took the medicines that were offered to him. He looked heavenward alone in the knowledge that if help were to come it could be expected only from his heavenly father, for whom all things are possible.

The last service was performed over the beloved body of the deceased on March 16 of this year. People flocked together from near and far to accompany the mortal remains of the departed benefactor to their final place of rest. The house could not contain all of the large assembled crowd, and so, following the uplifting address of the church elder, the

body was set out in the courtyard. The pleasing countenance of the deceased was witness to the fact that the blessed had looked death in the face with all of that peace and joy which only someone like Cornies, who had lived so active and fruitful a life, was entitled to.

It was painful, but edifying as well, to observe the funeral procession to the graveyard being joined not only by Germans but by Nogais, Russians, Jewish colonists and Molokans. The burial ceremony was favoured by the most beautiful weather.

At the graveside one could see individuals from all of the surrounding peoples and religious persuasions quietly shedding many a tear of gratitude and love for the departed. Many of those present were indeed accompanying to his last rest a man who had been their very best friend and benefactor.

May he rest in peace!

At the beginning of the settlement along the Molochna river, the deceased was told to gather fuel for his family. On this occasion, for the first time, he became better acquainted with the Nogais. Cornies would later often relate with great delight many an incident and escapade that he had experienced among the Nogais.

In the year 1806 the Cornies family settled in the village of Orlov along the Molochna. The first establishment here was undertaken with monies advanced by the crown. But since Cornies' father had in the meantime spent all his private wealth, the family's means were exhausted. The elder Cornies, who was familiar with the medicinal qualities of various plants, thereupon began treating patients from the surrounding area with great success. Soon Russians, Nogais and Tartars from distant places were flocking to him and making claims on his assistance. Gradually, in this way, the Cornies family achieved a degree of affluence. At that time Cornies' father was known only as the doctor (*lekar*), and down to the present day his sons were always called by the name *Lekarenko*. The proper family name, Cornies, is known only to relatively few Russians.

Immediately following the beginnings in Orlov, and because of the pressing financial situation at home, the deceased found it necessary to enter service with a mill owner. With a small sum of money that he had earned he now purchased a Russian cart and began selling agricultural products. He even made several journeys to the Crimea, which was regarded as being very risky at that time. Soon, because of his great integrity and entrepreneurial spirit, he acquired a sum of money as well as credit.

In 1811 he bought himself his first, not very significant, flock of local,

common sheep, and on January 1, 1812 he leased the unpopulated crown lands of the Mennonites.

One evening, as he was driving his flock along the Iushanle stream, he set up his night quarters at the very spot where the model estate of Iushanle stands today in all its glory. The following day, as he surveyed the area spread out before him, he concluded that it was a favourable location for the establishment of an estate. Then and there he conceived the plan for its development. The realization of this idea began soon thereafter with the erection of a simple earthen hut, and gradually the project grew into the now prosperous model estate of Iushanle. At the time of this first settlement, Cornies further contributed significantly to the dislodgement and capture of many a steppe brigand in this district. He did so in the fearless manner in which he stood up to them and through the loyal devotion of the Nogais, who kept him informed of all that was happening.

Some years later, in 1816, Cornies founded a stud farm, himself visiting the Don region to select suitable stock. The horses from this establishment are now sought after at all of the markets and fetch a very good price.

In 1817, Johann Cornies was chosen as the plenipotentiary of the Molochna Mennonite community to select lands for new Mennonite village settlements. In consequence, he was further authorized to determine the settlement locations in the Mariupol district and for emigrants from Wuerttemberg. The beginnings of Cornies' public career on behalf of his fellowmen can be dated from this time. The wellspring of his public career was an ardent desire, first of all, to secure the future well-being of the colonies, namely of the Mennonite settlements, and, secondly, to demonstrate the greatest devotion to his Monarch and to the new Fatherland. There was, he thought, no better way of expressing his gratitude for the privileges granted the Mennonites in Russia than ensuring to the end of his life that the Mennonite colonies would flourish and gain for themselves a highly favourable reputation. Privy Counsellor von Contentius, to whom the colonies owe so much, was a genuine friend and patron of the blessed Cornies. Their correspondence, extending over many years, reflects Contentius' unqualified trust in Cornies. After Contentius had died, Cornies often described his viewpoint as utterly trustworthy and said that he himself had succeeded in being so useful in later years principally because of Herr von Contentius. Subsequent heads of the Supervisory Committee continued to recognize Cornies not as a subordinate but as a genuine friend who helped them unflaggingly in raising the well-being of the colonies more and more.

In 1824 Cornies received instructions from the Supervisory Committee to improve the community sheep fold by buying merino sheep.

His first purchase was made from the estate of His Imperial Majesty at Tsarskoe Selo. A second purchase of stock was made soon thereafter in the Kingdom of Saxony, and it was this acquisition that was chiefly responsible for incalculably benefitting the Mennonite community sheep folds. Both of these purchasing commissions were executed by Cornies so satisfactorily that he received a public commendation in this regard from the Head of the Supervisory Committee, General Lieutenant von Insov.

The merino flock of the deceased, which was also established at this time, soon acquired such a reputation that male sheep from his flocks sold in distant provinces of Kherson, Poltava, Voronezh, and so on, and not infrequently at prices of 200 rubles banko per head.

In 1824, Cornies, on behalf of the Government and in company with an official of the Ministry, visited sheep farms in Southern Russia whose owners had entered into certain agreements with the Imperial Crown. Later, on the invitation of the former overseer of the Kalmyks, he toured the Kalmyk steppes, in order to give an opinion as to the possibility of founding villages on the broad steppes of this people.

In 1830, the Minister appointed Cornies as Chairman for life of the Agricultural Commission of the Molochna Mennonite district. This Commission was able to contribute so effectively to the rapid development of the Mennonite settlements mainly because of the untiring diligence, thoughtfulness, constancy and energy of the deceased. What Cornies was able to accomplish through this office can only be fully understood by someone who has had the good fortune of witnessing personally the prosperous condition of these colonies. As Chairman of this Commission Cornies succeeded, with rare ability, in drawing a clear line between brother (for the Mennonites, as is known, constitute a brotherhood) and superior, without compromising himself in the least.

As head of the Commission the deceased redoubled his physical and mental efforts and with youthful ardour, until late in his life, worked to advance all that was good and useful. It was here that he established his intellectual superiority over the minds of those who came in contact with him and compelled the very ground itself to do his bidding.

In 1833, the already-mentioned year of great distress and affliction, Cornies was able to preserve the very existence of the colonists through great vigilance and prudent leadership.

During this terrible year of famine the misery of the neighbouring Little Russians and Nogais also reached unprecedented levels, and the deceased again demonstrated that he was a true friend of humanity. This truth is still thankfully acknowledged by Little Russians and Nogais who live in the surrounding area.

Cornies' power and authority over the hearts of his fellowmen was seen most strikingly in the success he was able to achieve in making

sedentary and civilizing the Nogais, for whom the developed a particular fondness. Cornies possessed detailed knowledge and a correct appreciation of the Nogais and succeeded in gaining their trust to a remarkable degree. They unreservedly entrusted everything to him, and by this means it was possible for Cornies to exercise such influence over them. The first stage in the transformation of the Nogais, who had earlier wandered about with their herds, was the establishment of permanent dwellings. The second stage involved the introduction of Merino sheep. After the previously mentioned famine year of 1833, Cornies took advantage of the poverty that had arisen among the Nogais to introduce them to Merino sheep breeding. (An earlier effort of this kind had already failed.) Although some passages of the Koran appeared to constitute insuperable obstacles to the introduction of improved sheep breeding among the Nogais, Cornies was able to surmount these because of his familiarity with the Koran, which he knew in detail from a German translation. The Nogais maintained that a Spanish sheep was not a legitimate animal of sacrifice. Cornies, however, succeeded in proving to them from the Koran that precisely the Spanish sheep, as the most noble, was truly and properly the only one worthy of a Mohammedan's sacrifice. Thus one was able to witness how the neighbouring Nogais succeeded in achieving affluence by practicing improved Merino sheep breeding.

Cornies turned over to the Nogais half of the annual increase in several Merino flocks on the condition that they would feed and tend them for four years on their own lands. In this way, the Nogais were given an easy opportunity to acquire Merino flocks. Later, certain conditions respecting this matter were agreed to which continue to this day.

The third, in part still incomplete stage in the civilization of the Nogais, involved the development of well-planned villages. By founding several villages Cornies clearly demonstrated that Nogai settlements could be established on the basis of a plan. The Nogai colony of Okkermann is especially worthy of our admiration.

Cornies also worked beneficently for the neighbouring Molokans and Doukhobours. He won their complete trust and they gratefully accepted instruction and counsel from him, to the distinct advantage of their economic arrangements and development. Later, even from their places of banishment, they wrote to thank him and, in particular, for his successful intercession on their behalf with Prince Vorontsov.

In this region Cornies contributed much also to the development of cattle breeding. Until 1834, cattle in the Mennonite colonies consisted of the stock which they had originally brought with them from Germany and which, in the meanwhile, had degenerated. In 1835, Cornies purchased 10 Kholmogory cows and two bulls in the Moscow area for better breeding. The cattle which evolved out of this initiative has proven itself

amply. These cattle have won plaudits through their higher milk yields, better body shape and the sale of bulls from their midst for breeding.

The most eloquent proof of Cornies' ability to wrest great rewards from the soil of the steppe, indeed even to master it, are the magnificent plantings of trees and orchards that were to be found in the colonies. The often repeated words of the deceased regarding the planting of trees are typical of his attitude. He said, "One must simply will earnestly that plantings be successful and they will thrive." To demonstrate the truth of these words, Cornies successfully planted several small woods in the area of the highest steppe. In 1830, following the founding of the Agricultural Commission, when the planting of woodlots and orchards was pursued with earnestness and zeal, Cornies again led by example on his estate of Iushanle. He procured thousands of various kinds of trees from Ekaterinoslav and its environs. And when this did not have the desired effect, Cornies began to establish a seed plot that he made as large as possible. Soon the success of this venture had surpassed his most optimistic hopes, and the entire development, which at that time covered some 13 dessiatines, became a single, unsurpassed, nursery. Later, using this nursery, he planted numerous other wood lots and orchards in the colonies. Furthermore, out of the large nursery at Iushanle he sent significant shipments of trees of the most diverse varieties to points as distant as the Province of Kharkov and even to the Crimea.

As for the development of land tillage, the Mennonites, largely again through the influence of Cornies, were provided with a carefully thought-out system of steppe cultivation. The Mennonite colonies have come increasingly to recognize the great advantages of summer fallow and are thus laying the foundations of a system of tillage that will prove itself more widely in the not too distant future.

German colonists in the Molochna have built dams across many of the gullies that traverse the steppe and created many watering ponds for their cattle. Here, as well, in springtime, they have artificially irrigated meadows by damming steppe streams. The greatest and most eager promoter of this development was also Johann Cornies. Trees planted in some Mennonite villages as windbreaks will for years to come stand as a monument to the achievements of the deceased.

Cornies is also known for his significant contributions to the introduction of silk worm culture. As the number of mulberry trees increased, Cornies began to lay great stress on this branch of the economy, which is so important to agriculture in the area. The deceased generously supported this development with his own means, even though all that went with it caused him much grief. Although the amount of raw silk increased beyond everyone's expectations, Cornies realized that if the silk could not be more expertly reeled everything would have been in vain. He there-

fore resolved to seek instruction on this matter himself in Italy, but his sudden death frustrated the realization of this plan.

In response to a suggestion by His Lordship Prince Vorontsov, Cornies introduced the growing of tobacco into the region. Again it was by example that he demonstrated to the colonists how they might advantageously raise all varieties of foreign tobacco. Cornies even published detailed instructions on how this plant might be cultivated in the steppes.

He devoted himself assiduously to the cultivation of vegetables and flowers and on every occasion sought to popularize this branch of agriculture and disseminate knowledge about it.

To raise the level of those Mennonites who carried on a trade, Cornies in 1839, hit upon the idea of gradually bringing all possible trades together in a single village. He was thus able, with the agreement of the highest authorities, to establish a colony of artisans and handicraftsmen close to Halbstadt. The goals of this undertaking will surely be realized, for only now are the advantages of such a colony being more fully recognized, evidence again of how correctly Cornies was able to anticipate the needs of the future. In this regard, Cornies further set up a special fund to support and assist young artisans. From this fund he advanced short term loans to them at low interest rates.

During the time in which potato cultivation was being discussed throughout Russia, Cornies became actively involved, and over a period of several years voluntarily supervised this development in various districts of Taurida province.

Willing to be of assistance, as always, Cornies readily accepted a government request that he accept crown apprentices from the peasantry on his estates to learn agriculture by observation and practice, under his supervision. To that same end, he was helpful in finding places for young state peasants with good landlords in the Mennonite villages. The government's purpose behind this programme is now being realized, for already this year several competent Russian and Nogai young people will be in a position to serve other state peasants as model agriculturalists.

In 1845, at the request of His Lordship the Minister of State Domains, Cornies assumed responsibility for establishing and supervising a crown model forest of some 100 dessiatines in the Berdiansk district. The rapid and quite magnificent achievements of this crown model enterprise will unquestionably immortalize Cornies' memory within the Imperial Government.

Educational developments in the Mennonite colonies were appreciably advanced through Cornies' efforts. More competent teachers have been appointed and enjoy greater respect, and school attendance has become more regular. The zeal he brought to this work and the numerous efforts he made to save obviously neglected children from certain ruin, as

well as the watch he kept over moral behaviour in the settlements, incurred the enmity of many. But this did not, of course, weaken his ardour in the least.

The buildings in the colonies have gained immeasurably from both Cornies' example and the instructions he tendered on this subject. At present the construction that is taking place is more practical and durable as well as more beautiful.

In recent years, Mennonites from the province of Chernigov were resettled in the colony of Huttertal through Cornies' mediation and have benefitted particularly from his activity. In the course of five years, Cornies' detailed superintendence and paternal care has ensured that the inhabitants of this colony, who arrived in the Molochna quite destitute and in want of care, have come into full ownership of substantial buildings. Many have also become well-to-do. Cornies, at the bidding of the Imperial Government, also assumed superintendence over several colonist districts and for the establishment of several Nogai and two Russian villages, which, it must be said, were intended to stand there as models for emulation. In these villages one can see with great clarity marks of the man who designed and supervised them. Respecting the colonization of Jews, Cornies was recently charged by the Government to assist in this work of settlement as well. This responsibility he conscientiously discharged by making his wide experience available, and in this fashion demonstrated clearly and vividly what can be accomplished when a strong will is coupled with expert knowledge.

In 1825, the late Emperor Alexander, of blessed memory, honoured Cornies by paying a visit to his recently built and unusually attractive home. In 1837, in Simferopol, Cornies was accorded the honour of being presented to the now-reigning Emperor Nicholas. On this occasion, His Imperial Majesty addressed him by name as his old friend, and benevolently thanked him for his efforts respecting the Nogais. In that same year, Cornies had the fortune of receiving His Imperial Majesty, the Grand Duke and Heir, Alexander Nicolaevich, at his estate of Iushanle. Four years later, Their Imperial Majesties, The Grand Duchesses Gelena Pavlovna and Maria Michaelovna, did him the same honour. On this occasion, the Grand Duke and Heir as well as the Grand Duchess presented him with golden tobacco boxes as a lasting memento of their visits. In 1845, the Grand Prince Constantine Nicolaevich honoured the estate of Iushanle with a visit, but on this occasion Cornies was ill and unable to be present. His Imperial Highness, however, was so gracious as to send his personal physician to inquire after the health of the patient.

Prince Vorontsov, who had full confidence in Cornies, often visited him. The most recent visit of the Lord Minister, Count Kiselev, was received by Cornies with great joy. His Lordship's recognition of Cornies'

noble character was acknowledged in various ways but most notably in a communication of October 22, 1841, which went as follows:

"During my travels through the Mennonite colonies I was able to observe, with the deepest pleasure, their orderly condition as well as the progress in your own establishment. This I brought to the attention of the Highest Places, whereupon His Imperial Majesty graciously observed that the name of Cornies was already familiar to him as that of a worthy and useful individual. It is a most agreeable duty for me to inform you of this Imperial utterance, and all the more so as the Mennonites stand, and have attained, a higher level than that of all other settlers, serve these as an example in economic terms, and have, in this manner, achieved their destiny. The growing enlightenment of the Nogais redounds to the credit of the Mennonites as well, and this fact I likewise had the pleasure of reporting to His Majesty the Emperor."

In 1836, Cornies, by order of His Majesty, received a gift of 500 dessiatines of land as a reward for his exemplary estate of Iushanle; in 1838 he was elected to membership in the Learned Committee of the Ministry of State Domains; and in 1844 he was named gold medallist for services to agriculture.

It was our deceased friend's most fervent desire to be found worthy of the confidence which our Exalted Monarch had generally reposed in the Mennonite communities, and this he has surely achieved.

In the view of many who did not know him well, Johann Cornies was one of those exceptional individuals whose destiny was favoured also by fortune. Yet it was not Cornies' wealth that won for him the love of his Monarch and the unqualified trust of his superiors and fellowmen (for wealth alone will never bear fruits of this kind). It was his tireless striving to secure the well being of his brothers (the Mennonites) and of his fellow creatures that was unquestionably responsible for elevating Cornies so far above the level of this fellows.

The entire course of Cornies' life, despite his acquired wealth (which was for him only a means to useful ends), enjoins us to affirm the principle, which says, "Do not seek the riches of life outside of yourself; create them yourself within your breast." Faced with the example of Cornies' life, we are equally challenged to proclaim, "Love God and trust in Him. Love your fellowmen and labour for them. Love nature and work within it." The life of the deceased, imbued as it was with these views, was rich and full of accomplishment.

Based upon personal acquaintance with the deceased and written reports made available to me.

Agronomist Gavel