

The Adventures of the Seven Swabians



How the Seven Swabians come to Augsburg and get weapons in that city.

When one thousand and several hundred years had passed after the birth of Christ, it so happened that the Seven Swabians marched into the world-famous city of Augsburg; and they went forthwith to the most skilful Master in that place to have weapons made for themselves; for they intended to slay the monster which, at that same time, was wreaking havoc in the region of Lake Constance and plunging all of Swabia into fear and terror. The Master took them to his weapons-chamber where every one of them could choose a spear or anything else that suited him. “By God!” said the Allgauer, “do you call these spears? One of them would do me just fine as a toothpick. Master, make me a haypole the length of seven men.” – “By thunder,” said Thunder-Swabian, “Allgauer, don’t boast too much.” The Allgauer regarded him with fierce eyes as if he wished to pierce him with a look. “Actually, you’re right, man!” said Thunder-Swabian, chucking his double-chin; “and I mark your meaning,” he said, “*As all Seven for One, so for all Seven only One.*” The Allgauer did not understand him, but said, “Yes”; and the others were fine with it. And so a spear the length of seven men was ordered, and it was ready an hour later. – But before they left the workshop, each one of them bought himself something distinctive: Knoeple-Swabian a skewer, the Allgauer a casque with a feather on the top, the Yellowfooter spurs for his boots – they were good not only for riding, he said, but for kicking out behind you as well. Lake Hare chose a breastplate, saying: Caution was useful in all things; you couldn’t overdo it; and if it didn’t do any good, well, it wouldn’t do any harm either. Mirror-Swabian

agreed with him, saying: He would wear one also, yet not at the front, on his breast, but at the back, on his buttocks. Lake-Hare thought his companion was taking the mickey out of him, but the other said: "Mark this: if I advance with courage, I don't need a breastplate; but if I have to retreat and my courage falls by the wayside, then the breastplate is in the right place." And so he fitted the breastplate on, which, truth to tell, was a barber's basin from the Master's lumber-room. And after the Seven Swabians had, like honest men, paid what was due down to the last farthing, and also, as good Christians, heard mass at St. Ulrich's, and, last of all, bought in a supply of good Augsburg sausages from the butcher at Göppingen Gate, they passed out of the city and continued on their way.

How the Seven Swabians continue their journey and which road they take.

The Allgauer, who walked at the head, put his posthorn to his lips and blew a trumpeter's flourish; behind him came Lake-Hare and then Lace-Swabian, who carried the former's bundle on his back for him; then there followed Thunder-Swabian, who sang: "A bogeyman is roaming round the realm, Didum, Bidi, Bum."¹ Then came Mirror-Swabian, and right at the back Knoepfe-Swabian shambled and puffed along with his pots and pans.² And they all carried the spear, man for man, and looked for all the world like larks spitted on a willow-rod. – They had been walking for quite some time

¹ A song of confused origin which appeared in early 19th century German collections of folk-songs such as *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1808) as a war-song against the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.

² The author has forgotten Yellowfooter.

when it occurred to them that they would need to think about which road they should take for Lake Constance, where the monster to be slain was living. The Allgauer thought they should follow the River Wertach, then they would come to the mountains, and then they could not go wrong. But Yellowfooter said: The road over the mountains was a roundabout way; they should follow him to the Neckar, the Neckar flowed into the Rhine, and the Rhine into Lake Constance. "By thunder!" said Thunder-Swabian, "a brave man goes straight ahead." And the others praised him for these words, and they decided to go straight on, through between Göggingen and Pfersen and onwards. And so they waded through the Wertach, because the bridge stood to one side of them, and went over stick and stone, over meadow and field, through forest and desert, up hill and down dale, until they reached their destination.

How the Seven Swabians had their fortunes told by a gypsy-woman.

But on the road thither the Seven Swabians had many adventures to undergo, which was surely the fault of the gypsy-woman – the old witch! She was sitting outside Kriegshaber, by a bush at the roadside, cooking a peculiar mixture. "Well, it's certainly not knoeples," said Knoeples-Swabian after looking into the cauldron; and Thunder-Swabian even thought he saw, instead of pepper and schmalz, mouse-droppings and toad's-eyes swimming on the black-brown broth, a sight that quite turned his stomach. But Mirror-Swabian went up to the gypsy-woman and said, "Old bumpkin! You're going to tell my fortune." She looked at his hand and said:

“Who toils beneath the yoke of a wife
Has much to tell of trouble and strife.”

“The witch speaks the truth,” said Mirror-Swabian, and he shoved Yellowfooter forward. She now looked into his hand and said:

“If a man is overcome,
It’s no disgrace to him to run.”

She’s alluding to my boots, he thought, and she knows I can run. As both companions seemed to be satisfied with the fortune-teller, the others followed. And to Lake-Hare she said:

“He makes a scheme, draws people to it –
You’d have to be a fool to do it.”

To Knoeple-Swabian, she said:

“The food that you choose not to scoff
The cat and dog will polish off.”

To Lace-Swabian, she said:

“We know the donkey by its bray,
Wise men and fools by what they say.”

To the Allgauer, she said:

“That cart is hard to drive, to which
Unevenly the team is hitched.”

“By God! said the Allgauer, “I’ve experienced that many times when I’ve taken dung out. The witch sees, truly! right into our hearts.” But Thunder-Swabian, who had peered more deeply into the pot, wanted to have nothing to do with the paganness, but knocked her cauldron over into the fire, causing it to flare up with a crackle and then go out. The gypsy-woman, shaking with rage, cried after him in a booming voice:

"A maiden’s love is light and loose,
One day, ‘My heart!’ the next, ‘Vamoose!’”

And so the Seven Swabians could not escape their fate.

In this and the following chapters, what previously happened with the Seven Swabians is related.

But the time has come for me, dear reader, to make you more closely acquainted with the heroes of this story and honestly relate whatever else is necessary for you to know. So understand that Lake-Hare set out - - But you should know that this became a nickname for him from the time that the Seven Swabians had their adventure, about which you, if you have patience, will hear at the end; he had first been a field guard, then a forester, at Überlingen by Lake Constance. Not far from Freiburg in Breisgau, he encountered Lace-Swabian, behind a fence, where he had something to do and had just done it. And they made each other’s acquaintance at once, as honest Swabians like to do. Lake-Hare asked him what kind of countryman he was. He said: He was no countryman, but only a ploughboy for that farmer who was ploughing the field over there. Then Lake-Hare immediately realised what manner of man he was with; and

such a chucklehead suited him just fine. He therefore proposed to him that he come along as his servant and carry his bundle; and when he told a tale, he should say nothing but that it was true. The other said he really didn't know what was true or not true. To which Lake-Hare: "Listen, yokel, 'Right' means true, 'Left' means not true."³ Now he understood, said the other, and he would go with him and, for the weekly wage of twopence, carry his bundle through the whole wide world and further. – And to his very day the story cannot clarify what kind of countryman he was, whether a Swabian or a Swiss or a Palatine or anyone else from the German Empire; for he spoke the tongues of all lands, and none of them correctly. But he is called Lace-Swabian for the reason that he had laces instead of buttons on his jacket and trousers; and as the one and the other were torn most of the time, particularly the trousers, so he kept having to lend one of his hands, which became such a habit with him that he even did it when there was no need to. They both journeyed on and came to Yellowfooter, who was resident in Bopfingen.

Of Yellowfooter and what occurred next.

It is related that at one time, when the people of Bopfingen wished to give their Duke the yearly tax, which consisted of eggs, they put the eggs into a bassinet, and to make a great number fit in, they trod on them with their feet, which does no disgrace to their integrity. – For that reason, all the people in that region have been given the name "Yellowfooter" by the tongues of bad people. To one of these, the Bopfinger carrier, Lake-Hare

³ Lake-Hare uses words of direction for draught-oxen: "Hott!" means "[Turn] right" and "Hüst!" means "[Turn] left."

now came, and he told him: How a terrible beast was living in the great forest by Lake Constance, which was doing great harm to the land and the people. He could not describe it to him at all; but it was as big as a wild cat, yet far more hideous and dreadful to look at; and it had eyes in its head as big as golden guilders, they flashed like nothing other than the fires of Hell; and it had ears - - "Isn't that true, countryman?" – "Wrong!" said Lace-Swabian. "Right!" said Lake-Hare. "It's true, truly," said Lace-Swabian. And the other continued: He therefore implored his countryman that, for the sake of the common good, he stand by him with words and deeds and seek to win over faithful companions for him from all the districts of Swabia. Yellowfooter said: To be sure, he could not fight, but if called upon to run, he could catch the Devil in open country. As Lake-Hare said he could use such a man, Yellowfooter shook on it and said: He just had to pull on his boots and pack his knapsack. When this was done, they continued on their way. Initially, they were at variance over which way they should turn, whether towards the Ries⁴ or the Danube. In the Ries, said Yellowfooter, there were a great many geese, he had heard, but he didn't know if there were people there as well. But Lake-Hare said: It costs nothing to take a look; "and if we learn nothing new," he said, "then we'll learn something old." And with that they headed for the Ries.

Of Knoeple-Swabian and what took place next.

In the blessed land of Swabia, particularly in that region whereof mention has just been made, there exists the laudable custom of eating five

⁴ An impact crater in western Bavaria and eastern Baden-Württemberg, to the north of the Danube.

times every day, and that means eating soup five times a day, and knoeple or spaetzle with it twice a day, for which reason the people in those environs are also called Soup- or Knoeple-Swabians; and it is said that they have two stomachs but no heart. – Lake-Hare began his recruiting pitch, saying: How a terrible beast was living in the great forest by Lake Constance, which was doing great harm to the land and the people. It had eyes in its head, fiery ones, that were as big as a salt-cellar. “Right!” said Lace-Swabian; but Yellowfooter gave Lake-Hare a dig in the ribs, thinking he should not tell such lies. He, however, was not put off his stride, but continued to relate: The monster grew visibly the longer you looked at it and became as big as a poodle. So he asked him, for patriotism’s sake, to stand by him with words and deeds and assist him to recruit sturdy companions. Knoeple-Swabian said: To be sure, fighting was no passion of his; but if they needed someone to cook them knoeple, then he would go off on the adventure with them. Once they had agreed on the deal, Knoeple-Swabian packed his pots and pans and journeyed on with them. And they now turned their steps towards Lechfeld and Thunder-Swabian, whom they met in an inn at Meitingen with a pot of white barley-beer.

Of Thunder-Swabian and what else happens.

After the countrymen had toasted each other with “Much good may it do you!” and “For what we are about to receive,” Lake-Hare began his relation, saying: How a terrible beast was living in the great forest by Lake Constance, which was doing great harm to the land and the people. It was as big as a fatted ox and had eyes in its head like the dial of the moon; and

the monster visibly grew, the longer you looked at it. “By thunder!” said Thunder-Swabian, “now that I’d like to see; I’d part with – Hell’s bells! – sixpence for it.” Lake-Hare said: He could see it for free, he had only to come along on the adventure and stand by him and his companions with words and deeds. To which Thunder-Swabian: To be sure, fighting was not his trade, but he could swear like a trooper and curse like a heathen. Lake-Hare said you never know what something might be good for, and he should just come along. Thunder-Swabian shook on it after he had downed a tankard of brandy, to, as he said, disperse the wind the cursed beer caused in his stomach. At the same time he sang – for he was a merry bird, as people could tell from a glance – the ditty:

“Where should my footsteps lead me,
I’m dull of wit and small,
However shall I feed me,
I have no wealth at all.

As we were made to be,
So must I live as me,
My food kept for tomorrow
The morrow will not see.”

And then the companions continued on their way and came to Mirror-Swabian, who lived in Memmingen.

Of Mirror-Swabian and the Allgauer and what happened further.

In those days, it was not yet the custom to use handkerchiefs, so some would just flick away what genteel people now put in their pocket; others smeared it under their armpits or between their pins, where it rubbed itself away; others, like Mirror-Swabian, wiped it on their front sleeve, where it formed a mirror and glittered in the sun. Lake-Hare and his companions came to this man and represented the matter to him, relating that by yonder lake there dwelt a monster as big as a camel with eyes like millstones, and so he asked that he might stand by with words and deeds for the sake of the common good. Mirror-Swabian said: He could give words of advice, but as for deeds, the outlook was bleak, seeing that he could not even master his wife, who surely had seven skins like a Memminger onion. (And so the gypsy-woman was right.) But he knew someone who would take on the Devil himself: that was the Allgauer. – They now went together to him, and he was willing from the off, even though Lake-Hare represented the monster as much more terrible to him than he had to the others, saying: It was as big as a house and had eyes in its head like millwheels, which threw out fire as they turned round and round. – “By God!” said the Allgauer, “it’ll be just an animal for all that, and man is stronger, with God’s help, than all the beasts on Earth.” – “Yes,” said Lake-Hare, “and there is a proverb: God leaves no honest Swabian in the lurch.” Through these words, the others were filled with courage, and they all pledged, with a trusty handshake, that they would stand by one another, as friends and countrymen, in all perils and hardships of body and soul. And so the Seven Swabians resolved to first go to Augsburg, as was related above, in order to equip themselves

with the implements of war, as becomes brave Christian men.

**How the Seven Swabians come upon a bear and what they say
thereupon.**

But we shall catch up with the Seven Swabians on their journey, and here we meet them, four or five hours from Augsburg, in a narrow pass they have just entered. And look! an enormous bear is lying there on the road, and the Allgauer does not notice it until he almost falls over it face-first. He yells at the top of his voice, "A bear, a bear!" and thrusts the spear at the animal with might and main. But it stirred no more, for it was stone dead. Delighted at this, the Allgauer looked around and saw his companions lying on the ground, and believing that they were dead also and he had stabbed them to death with a backwards thrust of the spear, he set up a loud lament. But the others – it is not known whether from terror or from gripping the spear too firmly – had fallen to the ground; and when they heard that the bear was dead, they got to their feet, hale and hearty, and formed a circle around the bear, and this one plucked its fur, and that one even stuck his hand in its mouth, and not a man jack of them feared it any more. And when they examined the bear more closely and found no hole on it other than the one it had had all the time of its life, they clearly perceived that it had not been stabbed to death but had snuffed it; and Mirror-Swabian raised the question, "What could it possibly have died of?" Knoeple-Swabian said, "Why, of what else but hunger?" "No," said Yellowfooter, "of cold." And so each one of them had his own idiosyncratic opinion, like the men of

Schildburg about the dead wolf.⁵ But it is likely that only Mirror-Swabian, the sharpest of them all, guessed it right: It had died, if not of some malady, yet of death. Hereupon they consulted together on what they would do with the carcass, and after lengthy verbal toing and froing, they decided to remove its skin; one day, it would fall to the share of that companion who should comport himself the most manfully during the adventure. They would leave the carcass lying where it was “So the sheep may eat him as he had eaten the sheep,” said one of them, I don’t know which it was.

How the Seven Swabians got stuck in the undergrowth.

When the Seven Swabians entered the depths of a forest, they got stuck in the undergrowth. The forest became ever denser and denser; and one time, when the Allgauer was standing before a tree, he said: “By God! I must get through”; and he thrust the spear to one side with such force that it bent and Knoepfle-Swabian was jammed between the spear and a tree, and none of them could take a step forwards or backwards. And so it came true, that which the gypsy-woman had prophesied: “That cart is hard to drive, to which unevenly the team is hitched.” The companions undoubtedly wanted to set their comrade free; but as they tugged at his body with all too great a zeal, the one upwards, the other downwards, and to the left and to the right at the same time, so they did not exactly make any headway, and it was a near thing that they did not quarter him. Finally, the Allgauer took thought and cried: “By God, may the Devil take me if this help wasn’t sent from

⁵ In the story “Der tote Wolf,” the Emperor asks the men of Schilda (proverbial for their stupidity) for the cause of the wolf’s death. Several opinions are offered, but the one accepted is that of the Mayor, who suggests it is due to eating too much raw meat and too many dead animals and drinking ice-cold water.

Heaven!" and he seized the tree that pinned the poor wretch in and tore it out with a crashing rip, roots and all, so that the half-lifeless Knoeple-Swabian flew out and landed with a thud, as if he had been rammed into the ground. And now the companions began to feel true respect for the Allgauer, whom they might otherwise have held to be awkward and clumsy. And the benevolent reader who will not accept the truth of this little tale may take a look for himself at that place, where the tree still lies to this day.

**How the Seven Swabians encounter a maiden and how she invites
Thunder-Swabian to kiss her arse.**

In the region of Schwabeck, the Seven Swabians came across a pretty peasant's daughter in a field, who immediately caught their eyes, but Thunder-Swabian's most of all. The girl said, modestly and reverently, "Praise be to Jesus Christ," and they all answered as one: "For ever and ever, Amen." For at that time, one would meet nothing but good Christian folk throughout Swabia and none of the freemasons who are now found in every bush, as in the rest of the wide world. "By thunder!" said Thunder-Swabian, "I must stop and speak to the lass." And he walked up to her and asked her what her name was. She replied, "Käthe" and she came from the Countship of Schwabeck. And at the same time she looked him in the eyes in a friendly way; for Thunder-Swabian was no bad-looking fellow. He asked if she would not like to marry him. The girl laughed and said: Yes, if ever men were as rare as peppernuts. He said: She should just give him a smacker instead of the hansel. The maiden said: She had a slap for the

selling, but no kiss. Our Swabian clearly perceived that she did not really mean that, and he took her by the hand, which she allowed, and he asked if he was to have no hope at all when he came back, and he soft spoke her and stroked her and called her treasure-house and heart's-chafer and scapular-louse and chattered all kinds of foolish nonsense, as those in love tend to do. The girl at last had enough of this, and she said: He could kiss her arse, and walked away, but looked round one more time and said, "No offence!" And in this way was Thunder-Swabian stoutly sent packing, and it was certainly coarse, what she said, but it was good. And the companions all agreed that she was a strikingly pretty girl, as all Swabian lasses are, the ugly ones excepted. The Allgauer himself said, "By God! if the filly came from the Allgau, I don't know what I'd do." But Thunder-Swabian would not stop thinking about Käthe from the Countship of Schwabeck from that time on, and he firmly resolved to kiss her arse.

Wait a little while,
Bide a little while,
Sit you down a while, and when
You've had a little bite to eat,
Come and say it again.

How the Seven Swabians meet a Bavarian and how they send him home.

Outside Mindelheim – they steered clear of the dump, fearing the folk of Mindelheim might take fright at them as they had at the enemy

horseman who captured their town all on his own – at Aurbach they met a Bavarian, and they could tell at once from his clothes which land he belonged to. He was a brewer from Munich who had driven pigs into Swabia and traded them for hops in Memmingen. He stood in the road and left the spearmen walk past him, and had a mind to laugh at them.

Thunder-Swabian asked him: What was he looking at like that? had he never seen *Schwaben* before? “Oh yes,” said the Bavarian, “back home in my kitchen, there are thousands of them.”⁶ – “By thunder, split and sunder!” said Thunder-Swabian, and he walked up to the Bavarian, who was a big man, and he only barely came up to his navel. And before the Bavarian knew what was happening, the Swabian had leapt up at him and given him such a thundering box on the ear that fire shot from his eyes and his ears rang from the blow. But the Bavarian, wasting no time, stretched his arm out wide to give the Swabian a return; and it would have been a slap he would have remembered for the rest of his days. But because the Swabian was back on the ground as quickly as he had been in the air, the Bavarian struck into the wind, causing him to revolve like a turnstile and stumble and fall. Now they were onto him; Thunder-Swabian seized him by the throat; the others held him by his hands and feet and drummed away at him. But he would still have mastered them and would have shoved them all up into the air together like pillows if the Allgauer had not at last fallen on him like a two-hundredweight sack of corn and threatened to rub him out if he didn’t beg their pardon for the insult. The Bavarian had no choice but to do this, and so they let him go. But when he returned to Munich, he had the Seven

⁶ The word “Schwaben” can mean both “Swabians” and “cockroaches.”

Swabians painted, in everlasting remembrance, on his house on the meadow, where they are still to be seen today.

The chapter about the Forest-Hermit.

Now when they had continued their journey this way and that, they came by chance to the hermitage of an anchorite. He was just then sitting in front of his cell, reading a book. They called to him and asked him with doffed caps, as becomes Christians, if he could show them the right way. But the book that the hermit was reading was a tract *contra facetias*, that is to say in English: against tomfoolery. And so the Christian reader will not be surprised at the words which the devout man let fly at the Good Seven, for there was now standing before him, as he thought, a living portrait of buffoons. "I should show you the way, you vagrants?" he began. "Just wait! I'll ring your bells, you merry-andrews! I'll clip your wings, you pranksters! I'll pound your skulls to ashes, you Shrovetide Mummers!" – Lake-Hare interrupted his speech, saying: How a dreadful monster was dwelling in the great forest by Lake Constance... However, the hermit did not let him finish, but cried out: "Lord in Heaven! What diabolical rogues you have on Earth! There are seven good-for-nothings travelling together around the Empire, to the shame and disgrace of Swabia and Christendom! So are there no longer any useful jobs to be done in the world by such rascals as you? Are there no more pots to mend, no pans to tinker, no scissors to grind? Clear off, you vagabonds! Into the stocks with you, into the pillory, onto the gallows-tree, you vagrants, you hurdy-gurdiers, you zanies!" – "By thunder!" said the Allgauer, and "By God!" said Thunder-Swabian, from sheer

stupefaction and bewilderment. The former did a right-turn with the hay-pole and pulled the other six after him; and Thunder-Swabian tuned his fiddle and began to sing a ditty, so that nothing more could be heard of the forest-hermit's continuing invectives.

The Author's Moral

Perhaps, benevolent reader, my little book of the adventures of the Seven Swabians will also fare as the Seven Swabians themselves fared; and some censor and carping critic might snarl at it and damn it as an idle fiction full of worthless, indeed, even calumnious, farces... Benevolent reader! Then say to him: in God's wide world there are not only busy bees and industrious ants, but also butterflies, and merry ones at that; and we do not know whether, or to what end, the last-named are useful. But my little book – tell him this – is not intended to annoy anyone, but rather to delight everyone; and whoever does not find it pleasing may turn it out of doors. The swallow passes merrily through the world and makes itself at home wherever it is tolerated, and it brings no misfortune to the people of the house. It does not even disturb the titmouse who vigorously drives the little wheel in his cage; nor does it heed the night-owl, who sits in a dark hole with staring eyes.

How Thunder-Swabian gets into an argument with Mirror-Swabian and how they become good friends again.

It was night by the time the Seven Swabians came out into the open and onto the high road. And the moon was just rising. Then Mirror-Swabian

said: "Now we've made it, Memmingen isn't far off." Thunder-Swabian asked him how he could know this. "Don't I know the Memmingen Moon when I see it?" – "By thunder, how thunderingly stupid!" said Thunder-Swabian. The words were hardly out of his mouth before he was given a box on the ear by Mirror-Swabian, who could bear anything other than being thought stupid. "May lightning split your tongue," cried Thunder-Swabian, "you lowlife, you dipstick, you bastard, you swine," and so he ran through a whole litany. Mirror-Swabian also became more and more enraged, and so they began to squabble and to scuffle like two butcher's dogs. Then Lake Hare asked the Allgauer to make the peace. Not needing to be asked twice, he instantly grabbed Thunder-Swabian by the waistband and held him up in the air, like a frog, and all his struggling did him not a whit of good. In the meantime, Mirror-Swabian did not cease to pound Thunder-Swabian's backside; so the Allgauer seized him also, with his left hand, and held him by the waistcoat under his throat so hard and fast that he stood there as stiff as a poker, unable to budge an inch. "By God!" he said, "I'll teach you manners, you blasted strawheads." And he shook the one and throttled the other ever harder and harder, until they finally promised one another to be good friends again. And such, indeed, did they remain from that time on until their dying day.

How Thunder-Swabian exacts revenge on the Allgauer.

But Thunder-Swabian could not forget that the Allgauer had manhandled him so, and he wished to make him pay for it some time and give tit for tat. He held counsel with Mirror-Swabian on this point. But so that

the Allgauer might not give the joke a serious turn – for if roused to anger, he could snap them in the middle like hedge-poles, they knew –

Thunder-Swabian said: “Allgauer, if I take you on and throw you to the ground and give you a beating, what’ll you do to me?” – “By God,” said the Allgauer, laughing, “if you bring me down to the ground, then as far as I’m concerned you can beat me to death, I won’t bear you a grudge.” – “One man, one word!” said Thunder-Swabian. Now when they were resting on the slope before Memmingen – the Allgauer had by this time forgotten their words – then Thunder-Swabian said to him, “Allgauer, you’re not as much as a head taller than me.” – “By God!” said the other, “you don’t reach up to my crotch.” – “Let’s put it to the test,” said Thunder-Swabian, “it’s for sixpence; stand up and stretch out straight!” The Allgauer stood up and stretched himself and made himself as straight as a hop-pole. Then Thunder-Swabian went round behind his back, stuck his head under his crotch, and dug his fists into the backs of his knees, making him tumble; and with a shove from Thunder-Swabian, he fell over backwards and lay there like a sack of hops. Swift as the wind, Thunder-Swabian was on him. “Now don’t move,” he said, “one man, one word.” The Allgauer was an honourable soul, and so he suffered Thunder-Swabian to pepper him with punches to his heart’s content. But in the end it became too much for the Allgauer to take – he had been beaten black and blue. – “By God!” he said, “a fly is pricking me.” And he gave Thunder-Swabian a flip to the forehead that sent him tumbling over and over like a wood frog. That brought the fight to an end.

What kind of danger threatened Mirror-Swabian and how he rescued himself therefrom.

“We won’t go through Memmingen, even though good smoked sausages are to be had there,” said Mirror-Swabian. And when they asked him why, he said: Because; and: He should think that he knew best. “So be it,” said Lace-Swabian, “we can go around the walls and then out at the far gate.” So the Seven Swabians walked around the walls, through the hop-gardens. But then striking proof was once again afforded that a man cannot escape his destiny. Before Mirror-Swabian knew what was happening, a woman came bounding towards him out of a hop-garden, a real crone, and she shrieked in a voice that cut through bone and marrow, “So you’re back at last, you rascal! Where have you been gadding around all this time, you gallows-bird?” Mirror-Swabian recognised her at once to be his beloved other half, and he cried: “May all the saints help me! The Devil’s been let loose!” and he darted into another hop-garden. The woman went after him. In his heartfelt terror he hit upon a ruse. He had nothing to carry, for he was the one with the bearskin, and that now served him well. Hurriedly throwing it over his head, he slipped into the forepaws and crept on all fours like a real live bear. Now when the woman came closer, he stood up straight and lumbered towards her, growling. She no sooner saw the bear than she screamed out loud and ran away hell for leather. But the bear caught up with her and clasped her and hugged her, so that she all but fell into a swoon. Then he let go of her and went in search of his companions. Since the time when news of this merry prank spread among the women of Memmingen, they have described husbands in a bad mood

as being “like a bear with a sore head.”

**How they enter the town of Memmingen unwittingly and unwillingly
and inspect the beer there.**

The six other Swabians had gone on ahead and were now standing before a gate which people, upon their enquiry as to what it was called, named the Leutkirch Gate. “So we’ll have to go out through it,” said Lace-Swabian – or someone else, no matter which one. They therefore passed through the gate and entered the town, without realising or wishing it. But as there is no cloud without a silver lining, so did that prove to be the case here also. For the first house that their sight fell upon was an inn, with an ale-post in front, and over its door were the words: Here March-Beer is given out. When our Swabians saw this, they thought the March-Beer could be had for free. The innkeeper, who saw them coming with their great spear, stepped fearfully towards them and asked them what they desired. They would like to taste a sip of his beer, said the Allgauer, and he entered the tap-room with his companions. The innkeeper, believing them to have been sent by the Swabian Provincial Government to inspect and assay the beer in Swabia, to check that it was worth its price – which is certainly necessary in our times too –, fetched the best he had in his cellar (and that was not up to much). Yet the companions drained one flagon after the other; and when they had downed a good firkin,⁷ the innkeeper said he was glad to see that it was to their liking. Thunder-Swabian thought it could be better and there was too little malt and hops in it. “Begging your pardon,” said the innkeeper,

⁷ About 9 gallons or 41 litres; half a kilderkin or a quarter of a barrel.

who was a wag, “there isn’t too little malt and hops in it, there’s too much water.” The companions laughed at this, and Thunder-Swabian, being reminded of a poem, recited it:

“In Langensalz”

“It could just as well be Memmingen,” he said –

“In Langensalz

They brew three beers all from one malt:

The first is called The Cream of the Crop,

The burgomaster’s favourite drop;

The second brew’s called Middle-Beer,

Served to the common people here;

Swipes is the final brew,

Zounds, drink it! That’s for *you!*”

Then he played a few merry pieces in the innkeeper’s honour. – Now after the companions had drunk quite enough, they stood up and walked away, as if they did not owe anything to anyone. The innkeeper let them go, being of the opinion mentioned above; and he said it had been a great honour for him and they should just speak the highest praise of his beer. And they did indeed do this, and they wondered no end that in Memmingen, March-Beer was served for free. And so the innkeeper was made a fool of by his countrymen, but neither wittingly nor willingly. But the report runs that the free drink was well paid for by other countrymen – people do like to speak ill of innkeepers!

How our Swabians swim through the blue sea without drowning.

Although in the past a vigorous Swabian, if need be, could drink his five pots of beer at one sitting and yet still find track and trail without fail, nevertheless, our Swabians had looked too deeply into the jug, and their heads were not quite in the best fettle, as seems to be evident from the following, which is a true story. For hardly were they outside the gate than they lost their way in the hop-gardens and missed the highroad, and Mirror-Swabian sought in vain to catch them up on the road to Leutkirch. When they came out into open country, the Allgauer said, “By God! it’s all one; if we don’t have a road, we’ll make ourselves one; we’ll find the Iller at any rate, and then the bridge can’t be far away.” And so onwards they went double quick, over fallow fields, and the Allgauer blew his horn, Thunder-Swabian sang, “I let a little forest-bird etc.,” Knoeple-Swabian puffed and stumbled and fell time after time, and there was nothing for it but to keep picking himself up. Meanwhile it began to grow dark, and they meandered around, even though the Allgauer could see Mt. Grindten in the distance. Then suddenly they were standing on the top of a slope, and down below, as it seemed to them, there lay a lake with billowing waves. But it was a field full of flax that was in bloom, and the wind blowing strongly, it waved and billowed all right, but it was no body of water. “By thunder!” cried Thunder-Swabian, “what’s to be done here? We must go through, or we won’t reach where we want to be. Allgauer, be a Saint Christopher and carry us over.” – “By God!” said the Allgauer, “I’ll walk into water all right, but up to my neck and no further.” Lace-Swabian lamented that he could steer with only one hand, he having to hold his trousers with the other; and

Knoeple-Swabian stood there ill at ease and looked down into the water to see if there were not any whales in it. Thunder-Swabian marking this, he resolutely walked towards him, from behind, and said: "He who dares, swims," and he gave him a shove, sending him – with a plump! – to the bottom, where he lay. "He's not sinking," said Yellowfooter, "it can't be deep, so we can risk it," and he hopped down zippily and zappily like a tree-frog. He was followed by Thunder-Swabian, after that man had spat in his hands and taken a good run-up. "By God!" said the Allgauer, "I won't be the last," and he threw the spear forward and leapt after them. Lace-Swabian was hanging on to the Allgauer's waistband, and so he fell and landed more comfortably than the others; and this was the only time he acted wisely. Now there they all lay, at first as immovable as wooden blocks, then they stirred and stretched their limbs like half-trampled worms, then they gradually crept forward like snails coming out of their house, and finally they stood up once more, like men again, and said not a word but put their hands to their ribs to check if they were still intact. And after they had fished up the spear, they moved on across the field.

How the Allgauer finds the highroad but is almost drowned.

It was now dark night and they still had not found the highroad. At length, the Allgauer cried: "By God! now we have the road, and we're on the right track." But they were standing by the River Iller, and the Allgauer had taken the light channel of water to be the highroad. And he stepped briskly forward, the others blindly following him. Plump! he was in the water. "By God! I'm drowning!" He could not say any more, for he was already in over

his neck. The others all leapt clean away; only Knoeple-Swabian stayed and helped. For, to stop himself from constantly stumbling and falling over, he had harnessed himself to the haypole with a ribbon, and so he could not get free from it but stayed, fat and broad as he was, fixed to the spot. Consequently, the Allgauer was able to work his way out. Had it not been for Knoeple-Swabian, he would certainly have been a goner, together with the spear. And this was the only heroic deed that Knoeple-Swabian performed during the entire journey; but that gives all the less reason for this to be passed over in silence, so that justice may be done to the Swabians of every district. – At the ear-splitting yells the companions had let fly, Mirror-Swabian came over, having been waiting for them on the bridge; and as he knew every highway and byway in the area, he led them onto the right road; and at the next house where Our Lord stretched out an arm, they stopped off and lodged for the night.

Some anecdotes concerning Lace-Swabian, from which it seems to follow that he was no Swabian.

The legend tells that a Swabian had once gone to confession; and after he had confessed several sins, he suddenly paused. To the Father Confessor's question if there were still something weighing on his mind, the Swabian said: Yes, there was still one thing weighing on him, but he was too ashamed to tell it. The Father Confessor: He should shoot from the hip. Hereupon the Swabian: "I confess that I - - am a Swabian." The Father Confessor consoled him and said: "Well, it's not exactly a sin, but it's certainly no cause for delight either." – If it was not another Swabian who

confessed in this wise, then it must surely have been Lace-Swabian, for he really was as mutton-headed as a sheep; but also – be it said to his honour – just as patient and good-natured. Because of this, the others liked to poke fun at him; and he could take it. – Once he was to race Yellowfooter for a wager. But he could not do it. He said, “For sure, I won’t keep up with you; you’re wearing boots, and people take bigger steps with them than with shoes.” – Another time, Mirror-Swabian asked him: If he put his hat on back-to-front, what would be the front, and what would be the back? He could not work it out, even though he moved his hat this way and that way on his head and regarded it from before and behind. – On yet another occasion they asked him what his name was. He answered, “My mother told me I was called like my father.” Then what was his father called? “Like me, my mother said.” They asked further: What the two of them were called? Then he pondered, and said at last: “The one like the other.” – The gypsy woman certainly knew her man when she said, “We know the donkey by its bray”; and she knew that he had bats in the belfry. But what countryman he was – that is something she did not guess, or she would surely have said it, and then we would know that which we don’t know.

How the Seven Swabians were seized and imprisoned.

On the next morning, the Seven Swabians travelled onwards in high spirits and entertained themselves with the adventures of the previous day, heartily laughing at themselves. When they were passing by Kronburg, the Squire of and at Kronburg looked out of his window and saw the companions trooping past. Then he called for his sheriff and said: “Just see

what kind of people those are; no doubt they are vagrants or some other such rabble.” The sheriff took seven bulldogs with him and went down the mountain towards the Swabians. They were to follow him, without demur, he said, and the dogs bared their teeth. One must obey authority, the Seven Swabians thought, and they followed him without demur. Only Knoeple-Swabian was tardy, and he had to be hurried on a few times to obediently keep up. When they appeared before the Squire, he asked them wherefrom and whither and how and why. And Lake-Hare truthfully related: How a terrible beast was dwelling in the Lake Constance region, and so they had joined forces from all the districts in Swabia, as brave compatriots and upstanding men, to free the land from the monster. But the Squire did not believe this, rather holding to his opinion that they were vagabonds and thieving riff-raff, and he had them put into prison.

“You’ll see in Schnutzlputz’s house,
Many a singing, dancing mouse,
Many a barking snail in the house – ”

sang Thunder-Swabian in the prison, but very quietly, like a mouse.

How the Seven Swabians free themselves from imprisonment.

But the story tells us that the Squire of Kronburg had, the previous day, at a time when he was plagued with gout, formed the patriotic resolution to found a house of correction and establish it in his castle, to uphold order and security in the Circle of Swabia and to promote enlightenment and morality among the common people; wherefore it came to pass that, his head freshly full of this plan, he regarded the seven honest

Swabians as scoundrels and had them imprisoned. For otherwise, he was a very affable, pious, and gentle lord, who did not even fleece his own peasants for more wool than he needed to dress himself warmly. And so he ordered that the prisoners be given food, as much of it as they needed. Mirror-Swabian knew him well, and being aware that Skinny Johnny stalked his kitchen and cellar,⁸ he laid a plan accordingly, which he imparted to his companions. So when the sheriff brought a large pan filled with milk-spaetzle, Thunder-Swabian said to Knoeple-Swabian: “They must be for you.” The sheriff was of the opinion that there was enough for everyone. But Knoeple-Swabian said: He’d see if it sufficed for him. And he ate the pan clean on his own, leaving not a single spaetzle and scraping up the crusts, so it looked as if a dog had licked it out. The sheriff apprised his lord of this and said: They would have to cook a tubful of spaetzle all at one time, and he wagered it still wouldn’t be enough. So the Squire of and at Kronburg did some hard thinking and decided that he did not owe so great a sacrifice to the Swabian Government and to mankind as to starve himself in his own castle for the sake of a few vagabonds. And he ordered that the seven be set at liberty forthwith. But the seigneur prudently gave them a writ of apprehension to take along, to warn other people about them in accordance with his duty.

How the Seven Swabians encounter a herd of cattle and how the Allgauer has a fight with a bull.

At Leutkirch (which is a hole, half town and half farmyard), the Seven

⁸ “Schmalhans” – i.e. he had very meagre provision of food and wine.

Swabians had to pass through the middle of a herd of oxen and cows and calves and horses and foals and sheep and goats, everything being in a hectic jumble just like the Swabian territories. There, among cattle, the Allgauer felt right at home, and he pulled his companions, whether they wished it or no, through the middle and “left!” and “right!” and behind him and before him. This may have irritated the bull, who went at the Seven Swabians, bellowing and shaking his backside. They instantly took to their heels and ran for their lives to a nearby fence, which they swung up onto and then held fast to the pales, so that it looked as if hoopoes were nesting on it. Only the Allgauer did not yield the field; and as he, like a real man, was in his element when he had to handle oxen, so he quite calmly let the bull come at him: and then, just like that, he had him, now by the collar, now by the tail, and he pulled and was pulled, according as he or the bull was lord and master. This spectacle lasted quite a while, and the hoopoes on the fence watched the fracas, the courage and the skill of the Allgauer being their sport. However, the fight came nearer to the fence, and the ox sought to drive home his advantage, which gave the Allgauer time to duck and slip through the fence, or he would have been spitted. But the bull, in a rage, ran against the fence here and there; and here and there where he ran against it, one Swabian fell down after another. They screamed a scream for protection and help; and the Allgauer, taking pity on them, hopped over a stile and went at the bellower again and toyed with him until his companions had saved themselves behind the fence and now resembled hares crouching over their young. Then the Allgauer also cut his stick; and the bull and he looked at each other over the fence a long time

yer, until the former finally did the sensible thing and departed. Then the Allgauer fetched the spear, and the Seven Swabians moved onwards again. But Lake-Hare thought to himself: If he can take on an ox on his own, then we can't possibly fail, there being seven of us.

A few more anecdotes concerning Lace-Swabian.

As the Seven Swabians have no encounters at this moment, they observing dinner-time, so I have time to tell a few more anecdotes concerning Lace-Swabian. One day, they walked past a pond in which there lay dead fish. He said: "It's a shame they let those lovely fish drown." -As they were walking through a village one time, the hour struck three. He counted the strokes, saying, "One, one, one." When the hour had finished striking, they asked him what time it was, to which he answered: He did not know, for he had not added it up. – Once, Thunder-Swabian asked him if he could swear, and he should swear a truly diabolical profanity. Then he took off his cap and said, "I beg your pardon, but may a mouse bite you!" And that was the worst profanity he knew. Thunder-Swabian could certainly have taught him stronger ejaculations of this kind, for he knew the A to Z of swearwords; and examples enough could be adduced, were it not for the fear of annoying a Christian ear. – One more anecdote: One day, they were passing by a large manorial pond, and a ship had been torn from its moorings by the wind, and two smaller ones rocked to and fro on the water beside the bigger one. Then he shook his head and said: "It's curious that *everything* small likes to sport and play"; he thought the smaller ships were newly-born and the big one was their mother. – These and other anecdotes

are told of him, but I cannot vouch for their being true, for it is the habit of bad people, when someone once has a fool's rattle, to foist ten of them – a hundred of them – on him.

Of a travelling scholar and what he saw of Swabian's pranks.

In the inn where the Seven Swabians spent this night they met a travelling scholar, and when they asked him what countryman he was and what he was doing on his travels, he replied: He was called Adolphus and was a born Swabian; he had, however, studied in the North for many years and was now travelling around in the South to collect stories of the famed Swabian pranks, which he would then have published. Lake-Hare said: He need only travel with them, and he could learn more than enough.

Mirror-Swabian whispered into the Allgauer's ear that he should let him experience the pranks at once; but the Allgauer thought that they should not force the opportunity, for it would present itself sure enough. And it presented itself very soon. After they had eaten their night meal, they lay down on the straw, and the Allgauer came to lie next to the student, Adolphus. Who said to him, before they fell asleep: He should not be shocked if he were to strike around with his fist during the night; it was just a disputation and did not signify anything. The Allgauer said: There was nothing wrong with disputing; he too often did it in his dreams, with his oxen when they would not go forward. In the night, the urge to dispute really did enter the head and the fist of Adolphus the student, and his behaviour was so feverish that he struck the Allgauer on the nose, waking him up. "By God!" he thought, "he has heavy dreams; I must drive them away for him if

I'm to have any rest." And he took a whip that was hanging on the wall and lustily cracked it at Adolphus the student, yelling: "Right, Brownie! Left, Whitey! Go on, right, left!" and he lashed out this way and that. Adolphus the student, screamed blue murder. But the Allgauer pretended to still be dreaming, and he drove the oxen on even more vigorously by turning the whip-handle round and hitting out as hard as he could. In his mortal fear, Adolphus the student was all at sixes and sevens; he flung open a window, and the Allgauer lent him a helping hand, giving him a whack to send him on his way. – And in this wise did Adolphus the student experience quite enough of Swabian pranks in his own person; but I don't know if he included this one in his book.

How Mirror-Swabian rags a Tyrolean and is ragged by him in return.

In the inn where they spent the night, there was also a Tyrolean who dealt in theriac and Schneeberg snuff. Now, as is well known, the Tyroleans are not so stupid as they like to give themselves out to be, but are actually very crafty. And so, when other people jest and jeer with them and say "Trump," they say "Trick." And just so did it happen when Mirror-Swabian, wishing to chaff him, asked: Which language was finer, the Swabian or the Tyrolese? Then the other answered: The Tyrolese was cut from loden and the Swabian from coarse cloth. – Mirror-Swabian further asked him: When a Swabian and a Tyrolean are together, which of them will be the most stupid? "Each one in turn," said the Tyrolean. – Then Mirror-Swabian said: What if the Tyroleans were to go and become clever? The Tyrolean remarked: "Swabians, it's said, become clever only in their fortieth year, and

Tyroleans in their fiftieth; but, it's said, Tyroleans soon catch the Swabians up." And so they made game of each other, and both remained good friends notwithstanding. From this, it can be seen that Swabians can take a joke when it's made in a good spirit. – Before parting, Mirror-Swabian said to the Tyrolean: "Take one more little pot of brandy, for my sake." The Tyrolean did this, and he drank to his health, saying, "Thanks for paying!" And so Mirror-Swabian had to pay, for the sake of his honour, and was the dupe once again.

Of a heroic feat that Thunder-Swabian performed.

While continuing their journey on the following day, the Seven Swabians saw in the distance the lofty Waldburg Castle on Tannenberg mountain. Thunder-Swabian asked Lake-Hare, as a man who knew the area: Who lives in the castle up there? Lake-Hare said: Up yonder there lives a mighty giant. And he now gave his companions an exhaustive account of the colossus and the harm it had wrought in the region round about. But everything that he said was a complete and utter pack of lies, even if he himself staunchly believed it. Thunder-Swabian asked him: If their road passed close to that mountain. He said, "No," and he need not be afraid. "By thunder!" said Thunder-Swabian, "what, a man such as I am, be afraid?..." And while the companions were sleeping, he set out alone on the road towards Waldburg Castle. The giant was just then looking out over the high encircling wall, as one of us looks out the attic-window. His head looked as large as the disc of the full moon rising, and his black, shaggy hair hung down from the crown of his head. He was gnawing at a calf as if it

were a lark, and crunched the bones as though they were sugar buns. By applying himself with great deliberation to his meal, it is possible that he did not notice the little man making his way through the bushes like a weasel. Our hero jumps – without so much as a by-your-leave – boldly onto the giant, throws his arms around one of his legs, and climbs up it like a squirrel up a fir-tree. Now it is necessary to know that there is nothing giants fear more than toads, just as lions fear the crowing of the cockerel. Such a toad, thought the giant, was clinging to his leg. Filled with terror, he runs away, back and forth, up and down, and shakes and kicks and yet cannot get rid of the abomination. Then he finally stumbles and falls. Half dead with fear, he moans and groans ever more as he feels the toad creeping ever further up his body. And now it is sitting on the nape of his neck. Now he loses consciousness, and our hero calmly and leisurely cuts off his head.

Of Mirror-Swabian and how he finds a treasure.

There are envious people who believe no good of Swabians but rather say all kinds of bad things about them. They tell that Thunder-Swabian merely dreamed about the adventure with the giant; for such is the way with faint-hearted people: they are courageous only when they sleep. – However, that Mirror-Swabian dreamed, and what he dreamed, is true and certain. For he told it himself to his friend and bed-fellow, Thunder-Swabian, who found it to really be as he had said. It was as follows: the Devil had appeared to him. He led him to a cultivated field to dig for treasure. And when he had found a great deal of gold, the Devil said: “It is not allowed you to take the treasure away now, but mark

the spot, so you will be able to find it later.” Then the other asked what kind of sign he should make. The Devil said, “Clear off!” After he had done this, he awoke. – From this story, people can learn that they should not get mixed up in such diabolical arts as: fortune-telling, digging for hidden treasure, and conjuring, for the Evil Spirit uses such things to sow disorder; and he rewards only with insult and ignominy, as was made manifest in the example of Mirror-Swabian.

How the Seven Swabians meet a Jew, who enters into a business transaction with them.

Between Weingarten and Ravensburg, the Seven Swabians met a Jew. When Mirror-Swabian caught sight of him, he said: “Let’s fleece him.” So they went up to him and pointed the spear at his breast, and Thunder-Swabian cried: “Pay up or be strung up.” He said, “I’m a poor Jew; I’ve nothing on me but a few base coins; they’re not fit for honest people.” – “By God! that’s what we are,” said the Allgauer, “but you must lend to us, and don’t kick up a fuss.” “Well,” said the Jew, “I won’t lend today, the borrowers would be tomorrow, and tomorrow would push repayment back to the day after.” – Without doubt he learned those words, I would say, from the old witch, that gypsy-woman. – “By thunder,” said Thunder-Swabian, “do you take us for rogues who won’t pay back?” – To which the Jew: “We want to always be honest, but we cannot always be so.” And so he held his own against everything they said; and although they threatened him with certain death, yet they did not seem to him as if they would use the spear in earnest. And he would not cough up. Then

Mirror-Swabian took him to one side and said to him: “Do you know what, Yid? If you have nothing against the idea, let’s strike a deal; I’ll give you that bearskin.” The Jew opened his eyes wide and pursed his lips and spoke very amiably, saying: “Now, how much is it worth, I wonder? I’ll give twelvecence for it.” And they reached a deal at the price of a dollar. The Jew handed over the money, but Mirror-Swabian did not hand over the skin; for, he said, he had indeed previously said that he *would* give him the bearskin, but now he had changed his mind. The Jew had to like it or lump it, for there were seven of them to his one. He also had no particular reason to scrap over the dollar, as soon became apparent.

How the Seven Swabians relish Ravensburger sausages and what they pay for them.

When the Seven Swabians arrived in Ravensburg, they stopped off at the first inn they came to and ordered seven ells of Ravensburg sausages. And after the innkeeper had brought them, Knoeple-Swabian said: to avoid any quarrels while eating, it would be best if each of them took a length of sausage in proportion to his own body. The Allgauer agreed with him, and when he agreed with someone, the matter was settled. So they divided the sausages, and Lace-Swabian, who was the last to measure, was left with only a little tip; he put it in his pocket, thinking: When the others have nothing, *I’ll* have something. Mirror-Swabian – for such was the arrangement – handed over the dollar he had swindled the Jew out of and demanded his change in good, current coin. But when the innkeeper inspected the coin more closely, he noticed that it was counterfeit, and he

secretly sent for the town-constables, who came and took the Seven Swabians to the Town Hall. There they were charged with being coiners and pickpockets, and it was really on the cards that they would be hanged. And no “By God!” from the Allgauer would have helped them, and no “By thunder!” from Thunder-Swabian, and no lamenting from the rest – if the Jew had not ended up answering for them. This happened as follows. The Jew had outmanoeuvred them and, arriving in the town at the same time as them, he accused them to the authorities of being highwaymen.

Mirror-Swabian now noticed him in a corner, and he said: “That is the counterfeiter.” For all the Jew’s denials, he was seized and put in irons; for in those days, seven Christians still had more credit than one Jew, whereas in our time the opposite case seems to be true. But as the wheels of justice had been set in motion and, moreover, the writ of apprehension was found on them, so the Council decided that every one of them should receive thirty strokes less one, and that by way of justice. After that, they were given the liberty of the road. And the Seven Swabians and their compatriots have still to pay the Ravensburgers the reckoning for their treatment. But as far as the Jew is concerned, I do not know what the gypsy-woman prophesied for him; I think, however, he will still be alive if he wasn’t hanged.

How the Seven Swabians pass by a gallows and free a hanged man.

Outside Ravensburg, the Seven Swabians walked past a gallows. Now you should know, if you do not know it already, benevolent reader, that nowhere are there more gallows in the entire German Empire than in

Swabia, but you should not draw from this the conclusion that scoundrels are native there – it is rather that they flock together from all the other regions of Germany to a place where they know that nobody will catch and hang them. The Ravensburg Gallows, however, stood empty but seldom, and at that time it was the most famous one after the *Buchloe* Gallows, on which up to half a dozen could hang at the same time. And so there was one man hanging on that gallows, and he seemed to be still a greenhorn, not over a month old. Then Mirror-Swabian remembered that a thief's finger has secret powers and can help you come into money without – as they say – “stealing.” He therefore intended to cut a finger from the customer, thinking that it could not possibly hurt him; he clambered up the gallows and sat down astraddle the shoulders of the condemned man. Then the rope snapped and he fell down, together with the dead man, who, being completely rigid, leaned upright against the railings, as if he wished to climb over them; and Mirror-Swabian was still sitting on him. The other companions saw this, and in their first access of terror they thought the thief had come to life and was going to pursue them. And they ran away like pickpockets without looking over their shoulders, and they ran all the more because they heard someone actually trotting after them – but it was Mirror-Swabian, who was not dilly-dallying either – and they would perhaps have kept running to the ends of the Earth if they had not finally run out of puff. And then they saw that there was no-one coming after them; but they insisted that it really had been so, and Mirror-Swabian was of the same opinion. “He surely did the sensible thing and ran back home; and the Ravensburgers may look to a way of catching him again” – so said one of

them; but I won't say who it was.

How Thunder-Swabian comes down with homesickness and how Mirror-Swabian cures him of it.

Whether it be that the last adventures, particularly the caning in Ravensburg, had rattled our heroes, or that it had sunk in that the time and place for them to undergo the neck-risking adventure were coming ever nearer, or whatever the reason might have been: in short, they became more subdued by the hour and hung their heads like sheep being led to the butcher. But Thunder-Swabian in particular was utterly downcast and groaned and whined as if he had a bellyache. Yet it was an affair of the heart, and well might he have sung, had he been able to:

I know not what's the matter,
I don't feel ill, I don't feel well,
I'm wounded, but you couldn't tell.

for he was thinking about Käthe from the Countship of Schwabeck and how he couldn't kiss her arse. At these thoughts, his heart became heavy as lead, and he came down with homesickness. And when the others took their lunch, he ate nothing; and when they stood up, ready to go on, he remained squatting and put his head in his hands and cried. When Mirror-Swabian, who was his friend, saw this, he asked him what was wrong. "Leave me alone," he said, and began to blubber loudly. But his friend sat down beside him and comforted him and did not leave off asking. But he was sobbing so much that he could not get anything out but, "ts Käthe!" And now Mirror-Swabian knew what was eating him, and he spoke

friendly words of encouragement, saying: “Don’t be a big girl’s blouse!” –
Meanwhile, the Augsburg Courier was passing by carrying the May edition
of the Ordinary-Post newspaper throughout the Empire. Seeing him,
Thunder-Swabian said, “I’m going with him, and I won’t be held back, and I
will and must go away.” Then Mirror-Swabian called to the courier:
“Compatriot!” The courier: “Eh?” Mirror-Swabian: “Do you know Käthe from
the Countship of Schwabeck?” The courier: “I should think I do, why, she’s
the prettiest girl in the whole Empire.” Mirror-Swabian: “Then tell her I send
her my regards, and if she wants a sniveller for a husband, she should take
this one here.” – “By thunder!” cried Thunder-Swabian, leaping to his feet:
“Courier, hold your tongue and don’t lie, or may the ague shake you! You –
you – ” And he had by this time seized the courier by the throat, who had his
work cut out to defend himself. “By all the Saints!” said the courier, “I’ll
happily hold my tongue, just well me what I’m to say to her.” “First of all,”
said Thunder-Swabian, “tell her I’m a brave, honourable fellow; and
secondly,” he said, “tell her I’ll definitely kiss her arse; and thirdly,” he said,
“tell her that I send her my regards.” And then he pressed a silver penny
into the courier’s hand, and the courier promised expedition.

I don’t know what I’ve got,
I asked the doctor just today,
He looked me in the face to say,
Oh yes, I know what’s what,
You’re a sure-fire i-di-ot;
I know now what I’ve got.

Here ends the ditty.

How Lace-Swabian finds his mother, but not his father.

On the road, before Markdorf, an old woman was sitting by a well; she was wearing glasses and looking out before her as though she were searching for something. And as the Seven Swabians came along, they thought she was the gypsy-woman and walked towards her. She raised her eyes, and when she had looked at one after another, she suddenly cried: "Rudy, ma dear sonnie!" Lace-Swabian realised that this was his mother, and he said, "Ma, it's me alright!" She said, "Dearie, where hae ye been a' this time?" "Aroond the world," he said, and he reached into his bag and handed her the tip of sausage he had kept from his lips in Ravensburg, saying, "God gie ye good o' it!" His mother said, "Ye scallywag, hoo's the top o' yer heid daien'? Gie's a look." And Rudeli meekly kneeled down and laid his head in her lap, and his mother combed his hair and inspected it with a will. – When his mother had finished with Rudeli's noggin, she said: He should stay with her now. He secretly put a question to Lake-Hare, and when the latter had spoken to him, he told his mother: He had deeds to do first, and all his mother had to do was to wait for him here, then he would return with her to Switzerland. His mother begged: "Rudy, dear Rudy!" But Rudeli stuck to his guns: he had deeds to do. And he joined his companions and walked on with them. On the way, Lake-Hare asked him: Was he then a Swiss? He replied: His mother was from Switzerland and had served as a sutleress among the Redcoats.⁹ And so we still do not know to this day what countryman Lace-Swabian was, and whether he brought no intelligence with him out of Switzerland or he lost it once in Swabia.

⁹ Here, this refers to the Pandours, a Croat regiment in the Austrian Army in the 18th century.

Of several edifying conversations that Knoeple-Swabian held with Lace-Swabian.

Thunder-Swabian and the Allgauer basically held Lace-Swabian in contempt for the reason that he might be a Swiss and so one of the race of cow-milkers. Only Knoeple-Swabian stayed a faithful brother to him, and they were *one* heart and *one* dough. And there were natural enough reasons for this. For at table and in bed, Lace-Swabian, who was a puny little man, gave up the larger part to Knoeple-Swabian, that potbelly, which the latter acknowledged with deep gratitude. Moreover, neither of them had a superfluity of brains; therefore, they could speak a wise word or two only to each other. As for example: When the Seven had stopped for their midday rest one day, Knoeple-Swabian found a chestnut, and picking it up, he said delightedly to Lace-Swabian: "Look, Rudi, look! A lovely, good nut, that's sewed in a skin." Lace-Swabian looked at it more closely and spoke in great amazement: "Look, by God's Cross that was an awfy guid tailor whae even made a neat seam o' it." He thought that the part which stands on the stalk was the seam where the skin was sewn up. Another time, Knoeple-Swabian, who liked to hear about food, but liked even more to eat it, asked his good comrade: If he had ever eaten hare-meat. Lace-Swabian said: No, he'd never eaten hare-meat, but he'd heard from his ma that she once saw hare-meat being eaten. Which is certainly credible; for people say that the Swiss lack game, and salt, and something else besides.

Some time later, Lace-Swabian asked Knoeple-Swabian: Whether Our Lord were a Swiss or a Swabian. Knoeple-Swabian replied: One by one; if the Swiss are on the receiving end, then He is a Swabian; but if the

Swabians are on the receiving end, then he is a Swiss. Then

Lace-Swabian: But if they are both on the receiving end, what then?

Knoepfle-Swabian: Then they might want to look around in search of a Lord who will help them. Thus did the two of them often make fine observations on things with which frivolous people did not concern themselves.

How the Seven Swabians catch sight of the Lake and what they say thereupon.

When the Seven Swabians caught sight of the Lake, then Lake-Hare said: "That is Lake Constance." They stood still and opened their eyes and mouths wide and looked a look. "By God!" said the Allgauer, "that's a pool so big you could drown the Grindten in it." And Mirror-Swabian asked Lake-Hare: If those were wild ducks he could see over there, in the distance? But they were ships. And Yellowfooter: If people lived on the far side yonder like they did on this side? And one after another asked this and that, and Lake-Hare explained as follows: This was the German Sea – they should know – and it had a circumference of at least a hundred miles – he wasn't lying, said he – And the lake, he said, had no bed or bottom (*Boden*) at all; and for that very reason it was called the *Bodensee*, as was easy to comprehend. And on calm, clear days, he said, you could see sunken towns and castles in the water, and whole landscapes – he was telling them, he said. And there were fish inside, he said, as big as Constance Cathedral – he wouldn't be beaten down, he said. – There were also lots of nixes on land and in the water – "that's a must-see," he said. And when the lake was stormy, it threw up waves – he wasn't exaggerating – as high as Mount

Säntis. And he could tell of many more marvels, he said; but whoever did not see for himself would not believe it. “By thunder!” said Thunder-Swabian, time after time; but the others said not a dicky-bird. – After they had almost stared their eyes out of their heads, they continued on, past Überlingen, towards the forest where the monster dwelt.

How the Seven Swabians had lunch for the last time while contemplating death.

But before they entered the undergrowth, they wished to take a cordial for their hearts and their stomachs, and Knoeple-Swabian spared neither schmalz nor salt to make the hangman’s meal¹⁰ truly appetising. Now when they were sitting around the pan and eating the roasted spaetzle with relish, the Allgauer said, fetching a deep sigh that came up from the very tips of his toes: “It’s no small matter, when you get it into your head that you’re eating a midday meal for the last time in your life.” These words really hit home with Thunder-Swabian, and he too gave a sigh, and began to sing to himself very plaintively and movingly:

So am I to die,
I’m still so young, so young!
Were my sweetheart to know
That I to death must go,
She’d sink from sorrow
Into my grave.

¹⁰ “Henkermahl” – the last meal of one to be hanged.

Lake-Hare encouraged them, saying: "Dear folks, just think: Death ends all mortal woes. He who lies in the grave is well lodged." ("But not he who lies in the jaws of the cursed beast," said Yellowfooter.) "But we don't yet know if our hour has come." Lace-Swabian said, "My mother has often told me that my hour would never ever come." And he was the only one who did not take dying to heart. But the Allgauer looked ever gloomier and let his head hang ever lower and fetched another sigh and said, "It's no small matter!" and Knoeple-Swabian began to quietly cry to himself. Then the Allgauer fetched a third sigh and said, "It's no small matter!" in so heartbreaking a manner that they all began to blubber and bellow. Only Mirror-Swabian was not entirely sure whether he should laugh or cry, because he saw how Knoeple-Swabian strained himself to empty his heart and stuff his mouth at the same time, and the face he made in consequence would have been perfect for anyone who wished to put the fear of convulsions into children.

How the Seven Swabians arrange themselves in battle order.

The time had now come for the Seven Swabians to arrange their order of battle. Lake-Hare thought they should all set off right away in the same order they had kept up to the present; and Knoeple-Swabian was of the same mind, saying they should not make any innovations. But the Allgauer said: He wished to now be the last for once, for he had been the first for long enough. "As for courage," said Thunder-Swabian, "I have enough in my body, believe you me; but I don't have enough body for my courage nor for that monster." Lace-Swabian said: Why exactly should one

of them be the first and one the last? They should all just keep to the middle, then nobody would suffer any hurt. "And I think," said Mirror-Swabian, "the best thing of all would be that one of us die for all of us. Knoeple-Swabian," he said, "what do you say? How about it? You'd be the perfect mouthful." But the other screamed and stamped and thrashed out with all fours, as though he were already stuck on the spit. Now Lake-Hare spoke out, as follows: "Dear friends and countrymen! Well begun is half done. There is nothing better than good spirits in a bad business. The good heart triumphs in any and every evil. Never has the faint of heart left the field with honour." Then he turned to Yellowfooter and said to him, "Jackli, go, you be the first, you're wearing boots, you're wearing spurs, the hare's teeth can't do their worst." And Yellowfooter yielded to persuasion, for he thought of the gypsy-woman's words, and he said to himself: "Either the beast runs away, then I'll run after it; or it runs at me, then I'll run away, and we won't catch each other as long as we live."

How the Seven Swabians fight the battle.

Well, now that it has come to the stage when I describe to you, benevolent reader, the greatest and most perilous adventure that the Seven Swabians underwent: so I find myself in no small quandary as to how I should represent the affair in accordance with the truth. For because I myself did not, alas! take part in the exploit, I had to hear about it from those very men who were, reportedly, there present; especially from Lake-Hare, the initiator of the heroic group and the herald of its heroism. But he, as you know, was an arch-liar, a born braggart, prater, and teller of tall tales. And

the rest of them, be it said with respect, probably have just as little claim to trustworthiness; for every one, it can safely be assumed, will have related only to his own advantage, laying great stress upon his part in the adventure. In such a predicament, what is the historiographer to do? Without doubt – the best thing. And so I shall take and give the story as it seems to me to be most natural and truthful. Others do not act otherwise in other matters. – So let it be known that the Seven Swabians walked into the undergrowth, heading forwards nice and slowly towards that bush where, as Lake-Hare said, the dragon had its nest. When they had come very close, Mirror-Swabian said: “I feel a griping in my guts, and I need to go off to the side.” The Allgauer would not allow this, saying: He must do as the others did and not go his own way. Mirror-Swabian replied: He only wanted to go scouting to see where the beast was. “Let it be,” said the Allgauer, “where it is, and stay here, I say.” – “Now be quiet and hold your tongues,” cried Lake-Hare, “and look and listen.” And as they press forward towards the bush, looking and listening, behold – a hare is lying in the bush, also looking and listening, and it sits up on its hind legs and gives a start and runs away. Now the Seven Swabians stand rooted to the spot, utterly flabbergasted and flummoxed. “Did you see it? Did you see it?” they cried, one after the other; “and it was as big as a poodle – as a fattened ox – as a camel,” they said, one after the other. “By God!” the Allgauer said last of all, “if that wasn’t a hare, then I can’t tell the Grindten from a hill.” – “Well, hare or no hare!” said Lake-Hare, “a lake-hare is simply greater and grimmer than all the hares in the Holy Roman Empire.” And he did well to say so. – But this animal race, I think, will most probably have died out, like the

mammoth, since that time.

How the Seven Swabians set up a trophy and enter Überlingen in peace and joy.

After the Seven Swabians had successfully survived the adventure, they almost came to blows with one another. The reason was this: Lake-Hare made mention of the bearskin and said that it belonged to him by rights, according to their agreement, for he had been the one who had led them all (which the gypsy-woman had figuratively alluded to). The others would not concede this, and Yellowfooter said: Whether he deserved it or not was a point he would not contest; but he had stood at their head once, and consequently – “And I walked at the head,” said the Allgauer, “and By God!” he exclaimed, “I’d like to see the man who takes it from me.” After they had continued wrangling in this way for a long time, Lake-Hare made a speech, as follows: “Dear countrymen and friends, I have something to say to you: The world will be full of our deed one day, and so it is necessary that a trophy be raised that will last until the end of time. Now, because we cannot remove the skin from the lake-hare itself, since we did not catch him, but drove him away over the Rhine, to roam around the land of the French, where he can indulge his jaws to his heart’s content, so let us, instead of that, exhibit the bearskin – that’s *quite* something,” he said, “together with the spear in my hometown, Überlingen, in whose vicinity the exploit was accomplished. If you agree, raise your finger and say Yes.” The others raised their fingers and said Yes; and the Allgauer said, “I don’t say no,” and handed over the bearskin, which they then put on the spear. And

so the Seven Swabians came into concord and content, and they then entered Überlingen with the jubilant cry, “Victory in Swabia!” And they betook themselves to the church forthwith, where they praised God and gave thanks for the happy outcome of their hard-won victory. But after that, they went into the inn “At the Golden Crown” to refresh their bodies with Lake-wine. And Thunder-Swabian tuned his fiddle and sang:

To be a fool is what I choose,
I leave all things behind;
So wine, not beer, is my pet booze,
Such fools aren’t hard to find.

This chapter treats of Lake-wines and what kind of one the Seven Swabians drank at the end.

It is told of a Swabian who had gone to Rome that, when an Italian innkeeper placed a good wine before him, he asked his host what kind of juice that was. The innkeeper said: “Those are Christ’s Tears.” At this, the Swabian is said to have lifted his eyes to the heavens and exclaimed: “Oh God, why didn’t you cry in our land as well!” – It is likely that he had never drunk any other wine than Lake-wine, which might be called, with perfect justice, “Peter’s Tears.” – But there are three kinds of Lake-wine: the first and best kind is called *Sorrel*, it tastes a little better than vinegar, and it contorts one’s mouth only in a very slightly visible way; the second kind is called *Three-Men-Wine*, it is sharper and sourer than vinegar, and it has this name because, it is said, two men keep a firm hold of the man who

drinks it while a third pours the wine down his throat; the third kind is *Revenge-Powder*, and it has the good property of expelling phlegm and everything besides; but at the same time, it is needful that the man who lies down to sleep with this wine inside him have himself woken up during the night so he can turn over, for otherwise the *Revenge-Powder* might eat a hole in his stomach. – Now when the companions came into the inn parlour and ordered seven pints of wine, the innkeeper asked them what kind they wanted, and he told them the names of the wines. “By Thunder!” said Thunder-Swabian, “you don’t put Sorrel before honest Swabians; and don’t you see, Harebrain, that there are seven of us?” So the innkeeper brought seven pints of *Revenge-Powder*, of an extra-fine vintage (but he was shyster enough to charge the price of Sorrel for it); and the Seven Swabians quaffed with body and soul, carousing away and drinking merrily on, deep into the night. And at the very end, Thunder-Swabian sang a ditty, which ends:

My song will sound no longer,
Fuddled, fuddled – good night!

Of the Chapel of the Swabian Saviour.

The people of Überlingen, when they heard about their countryman’s feat and saw the captured trophy, unanimously decided to make a pious donation, so they built a field-chapel by the lake, where the spear would be mounted for eternal remembrance. The chapel was built in honour of the Redeemer, and a wood-carver received the commission to make an exquisite figure of the Lord out of wood, seven ells high; he did this, and on

the stand he wrote in gilt letters: "Saviour of the World." But the people of Überlingen did not approve the inscription; rather, as the Lord had delivered the Seven Swabians from their troubles and perils, He should be called the *Swabian* Saviour. And this was done. Lake-Hare built himself a hut beside the little church and became a hermit; and many pilgrims came to Überlingen, to whom the hermit told all the particulars of the story of the Seven Swabians, which is why the world is still full of it today. And at that time the Swabian Saviour was as famous as the Great God of Schaffhausen.¹¹ However, the chapel was destroyed in the Thirty Years' War, and the Swedes took the trophy away with them.

The last chapter, which does not however mark the end of the story of the Seven Swabians.

What became of the other companions, and what further adventures were had by Mirror-Swabian in particular, is treated in its own little book. Here, only a brief report on Thunder-Swabian is given, how the gypsy-woman's oracle to him did not come true, but rather the exact opposite happened, for he had destroyed her evil spell. And he did, as promised, kiss the arse of Käthe from the Countship of Schwabeck, and they became man and wife and begat many children and lived a long, long life in peace and harmony. And the man who writes this is descended from them, and they were his great-great-grandparents.

¹¹ A 22-foot wooden crucifix in the minster in Schaffhausen, Switzerland.



Die sieben Schwaben

Eg. Mühlberg pinx