

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Tale of the Seven Swabians**

1853 (expanded) version

Once upon a time there were seven Swabians who wished to be great heroes and wander all over the world in search of adventure. So that they might be well armed, they first made their way to the world-famous city of Augsburg and went at once to the most dexterous Master there in order to equip themselves with shield and sword. For they had nothing less in mind than slaying the colossal monster which, at that time, was wreaking terrible havoc in the Lake Constance region. The Master was somewhat astonished when he saw the seven, but he immediately opened his armoury, which offered the brave companions a splendid selection. "By God!" cried the Allgauer. "Are these supposed to be spears? One of them would do me fine as a toothpick. For me, a spear the length of seven men isn't long enough." – At this, the Master, for his part, gave him a look that almost put the Allgauer out of temper. For he returned the look with grim eyes, and they were within a hair of starting something when Thunder-Swabian interposed at just the right time. "By Thunder!" he cried, "you're right, and I see what you're thinking: *Just as all seven for one, so one spear for all seven.*" The Allgauer could not quite get his head round this, but it seemed to be just the very thing for the others, so he said, "Aye". And the Master manufactured the spear that measured the length of seven men in less than an hour. 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, while the Yellowfooter bought spurs for his boots, observing: Such things were good not only for riding but for kicking out behind as well. When Lake-Hare had at length chosen a

breastplate for himself, Mirror-Swabian wholeheartedly agreed with his exercising such caution, but thought it would be better to put the breastplate on his back instead of on his front. And he bought himself an old barber's basin from the Master's lumber-room, big enough to cover his lower back parts. "Look here: if I have courage and I go forwards, I don't need any armour; but if we have to beat a retreat and my courage falls by the wayside, my armour is in the right place." And after the Seven Swabians had properly paid for everything to the last farthing like honest men, and had heard mass at St. Ulrich's as good Christians, and had, last of all, bought a supply of good Augsburg sausages from the butcher at Göppingen Gate, they passed out of the gate and continued on their way.

All seven of them held the spear and walked in single file, looking for all the world like larks on a spit. At the front was Herr Schulz, the Allgauer, as the manliest among them; then came Jackli, called the Lake-Hare; after that Marli, called the Lace-Swabian, who was followed by Jergil, called the Thunder-Swabian; afterwards went Michel, also called Mirror-Swabian, then came Hans, the Knoeple-Swabian, and last of all came Veitli, who was the Yellowfooter. There was a good reason behind every one of these epithets. Herr Schulz was called the Allgauer because he was Allgau-born; the Lake-Hare had resided by the shores of Lake Constance; the Lace-Swabian bore this name because he had laces instead of buttons on his trousers, and was nearly always holding the latter up with his hand as a result of the laces oftentimes having torn off. The Thunder-Swabian was so called because he was accustomed to use the phrase, "By Thunder!" The Mirror-Swabian had the habit of invariably wiping his nose on the front of his jacket, which took therefrom a certain glassy gleam that procured him

this neat name. Knoeple-Swabian was a man who knew how to cook good knoeple or spaetzle, that is *Knötel* in Bavarian German and *Klöse* in Saxon German. The Yellowfooter, finally, came from down Bopfingen way, whose inhabitants are called Yellowfooters by their neighbours for the following reason: once, they wanted to cram a cartload of eggs, which they had to take to their duke as a tax, as full as possible, and to this end they trod on the eggs so firmly that the eggs were rather a little smashed and the Bopfingers' feet were yellowed.

Now the seven set out with their spear, in good spirits every one, and at dusk one day in the haymaking month¹ they were walking over a green meadow when, no great distance away from them, a hornet rose up with a hostile buzzing from behind a briar hedge and flew past. This gave Schulz, the Allgauer, a mighty shock, and he began to sweat a cold sweat, almost lost his grip of the spear, and yelled to his comrades-in-arms, "Hark! Hark! The enemy's drumming!" Then Jackli, who was walking close behind Schulz, smelt a foul odour and cried, "Indeed! Indeed! Something's near at hand! I can smell the powder!" Then Herr Schulz took to his heels, letting the spear fall to the ground, and leapt over a fence, but he happened to land on the teeth of a rake, and the handle sprang up into his face and gave him a mighty clout. Schulz, thinking that the Devil was pitching into him, yelled out, "Have mercy! I surrender!" The other six had jumped over the fence after him, and when they heard their leader yelling in this way, they all yelled, "If you surrender, I surrender too! If you surrender, I surrender too!" But there was no one around who wanted to take the Seven Swabians captive, and when they realised this, they were ashamed of their scant

¹ "Heumond" – July.

courage; and they swore not to breathe a word to anyone of this, their first heroic exploit.



After this, the Seven Swabians' campaign brought them to a narrow pass, and as they marched towards it as brave as you please, they did not notice that an enormous bear was lying in the way until the Allgauer almost bumped his nose against it. When he saw the bear, he was frantic with fear, he stumbled, and unable to stop himself, thrust the spear straight at the bear, and yowled to high heaven, "A bear! A bear!" He thought his last loaf had been baked and eaten. Yet the bear did not stir, from being stone dead. Delighted at this, the Allgauer looked around at his brethren, and was horrified anew to see them all lying on the ground dead quiet, and apparently quietly dead; he thought he had stabbed them to death with a backwards thrust of the spear, and he started to wail. When those lying on the ground realised that the bear had not devoured the Allgauer – for they had only tumbled down from shock – they cautiously looked up, and seeing that the bear was dead, they got up, hale and hearty, walked around the

bear and over it, and would have investigated the depth of the wound that the spear had inflicted on him – but they could not find one, and the Thunder-Swabian said, “By Thunder! The bear has snuffed it and been dead a long time!” – “Indeed,” said Jackli, “I thought I smelt a rat.” They all agreed to remove the bear’s skin and carry it with them as a token of victory but to leave the carcass lying where it was. “May the sheep now eat the bear, as he formerly ate the sheep!” said one of them, and so they continued on their way with their bearskin and their spear.

They now happened to enter a forest and went deeper and deeper into the thicket until they got stuck. In the end, the trees were so dense that there could be no thought of progressing; and at last, the Allgauer stepped before a massive trunk, raised the spear, and roared like a lion, “By God! This must get through!” And with these words he ran the spear into the ground with such force that Knoeple-Swabian was jammed in between the tree and the spear, like a wedge, and could neither shift nor stir. And that was no laughing matter, for now the procession came to a dead stop and could neither go on nor go back. To be sure, the companions made several mighty attempts to pull Knoeple-Swabian out of his fix, but they strove in vain: Hans sat fast and did not budge. Then suddenly it was as if a great thought had arisen in the Allgauer’s mind: looking around him, he exclaimed, “By God! May the Devil take me if this help wasn’t sent from God!” And crying, “Hie on, ox!” he seized the tree with powerful hands and tore it out, root, stump and branch. Knoeple-Swabian, more dead than alive, sprang out just like a ball from a racket, flew six fathoms heavenwards, and landed with a thud that shook the earth. But the five others looked at the Allgauer with deep reverence, for it now dawned on them what a find they

had made in Herr Schulz.

A little further on, it was once again made manifest that the Allgauer did not keep a tight rein on his courage, for when the seven had extricated themselves from the thicket, a brewer from Munich came walking up, driving a herd of pigs before him, and you could tell at a hundred paces which region's child he was. He stopped, his arms akimbo, when he caught sight of the seven with the spear and made a face as if to laugh at the valiant fellows. At once Thunder-Swabian was standing before him, testily asking, "What're you looking at, friend? Have you never seen a *Schwabe* (Swabian) before?" – "Oh, plenty of them," returned the other, "back at my malt-kiln, there are thousands of them running around." He meant, by way of mockery, the black beetles which also go by this name (*Schwabe*), no living soul knows why. That was enough to raise Thunder-Swabian's hackles, for at times he was as bilious as a May-frog. He went at the Bavarian and speedily gave him a slap that made his eyes flash sparks and his ears buzz just like a large hornet. The Bavarian, wasting no time, stretched his arms out wide to give the Swabian a remembrancer; and it would have been one that stayed in his mind for the rest of his days. But Thunder-Swabian being a pint-sized little fellow, he turned upon one leg seven times, having learned nothing so well during his life as how to take to his heels. So it came about that the Bavarian gave the air a tremendous blow, turned round and round like a spinning top, stumbled, and crashed to the ground like a hay-pole. That was the start of his undoing; Thunder-Swabian fell upon him like an allotment-holder and grabbed him by the throat, while the others held his hands and feet and lustily pummeled him. But he would still have mastered them in the end, for he was a big,

strong fellow, had the Allgauer not also fallen upon him like a two-hundredweight sack of corn. Then he had to make his apologies, whether he liked it or not, for the troop would not loose and liberate him otherwise.



And then it happened that the boon companions continued their journey till they came to a wide blue lake, as it seemed to them – for the light had grown somewhat dim by this time – whose waves billowed in the wind; and the Seven Swabians stood at the top of its slope and looked down, seeking the quickest way to cross this lake. However, there was no water down below, but a field full of flax, which was just then in its fullest, bluest bloom.

“By Thunder!” cried Thunder-Swabian. “What’s to be done here? We must get across the wild water!”

“Allgauer, you carry us over, as St. Christopher erstwhile carried the pilgrims!” said Lake-Hare. – “By God!” the Allgauer replied, “I’d go into the water all right, if it went no higher than my neck.” Lace-Swabian grasped the waistband of his trousers with one hand, holding on to the noble garment to keep it from slipping off while he was swimming with the other hand; to Knoeple-Swabian, this was by no means a matter of indifference: he looked closely to see if there were any sharks, whales, or crocodiles churning the water; and the others stood there too, quite at a loss what to do, until Thunder-Swabian slipped around the back of them and pushed a few of them down, crying out, “He who dares, swims!” As they did not go under, Yellowfooter took heart and hopped down, Thunder-Swabian and Lace-Swabian followed him with more confidence, and last of all the Allgauer rode down on the spear; and down below, they flopped one on top of the other, until they realised that they had fallen flat on their faces into a field, and one by one they picked themselves up, with rather crushed ribs, and strode onwards with the spear once again.

Up to this hour the seven had held to the spear in harmony, neither devilry nor dissension arising among them. Then the Evil One came and sowed discord in between Thunder-Swabian and Mirror-Swabian. It came to pass in the following way. When the troop had walked a good distance further, it was night and the moon was beginning to rise. Then Mirror-Swabian was overcome with a curious feeling, just as if he were at home, and he said, “We’ve reached it now, Memmingen isn’t far off.” Thunder-Swabian looks at him in amazement and asks how he could know

that. Mirror-Swabian laughed knowingly, "Why, I think I know the Memmingen Moon when I see it." At this, the other laughed so hard that the tears ran down his cheeks, and he exclaimed: "By Thunder! Friend, how can you be so thunderingly stupid!" Now Mirror-Swabian had a thick skin, he had been the butt of hard words many times in his life, but he could not bear to be thought stupid. That just happened to be his sensitive spot. No sooner were the words spoken than Thunder-Swabian had his ears boxed. Now the two went for one another just like a pair of butcher's dogs, vying to see who could thrash the other the harder, to the entertainment of the rest, until at last Lake-Hare asked the Allgauer to make peace. Not needing to be asked twice, he quickly grabbed Thunder-Swabian by the waistband and held him up in the air, like a frog, struggle as much as he might. In the meantime, Mirror-Swabian did not cease pounding Thunder-Swabian's backside; so the Allgauer seized him as well and held him by the waistcoat under the throat so hard and fast that he stood there as stiff as a poker, unable to budge an inch. "By God!" cried Herr Schulz. "I'll teach you manners, you blasted strawheads!" He shook the one and throttled the other ever more forcibly until they finally promised each other to be good friends again, and such did they remain, from that time on, until their dying day.

It soon became evident that Mirror-Swabian had by no means been so stupid as Thunder-Swabian had chiefly believed, for when they had walked for another two quarters of an hour they duly arrived at Memmingen, as the former had prophesied from the moon. However, as if this very town was fated to bring Mirror-Swabian nothing but misfortune on this day, so did it soon come to pass once again that the poor fellow was to be punished in

skin and hair.² “Let’s not go through Memmingen,” he had said, and when he had been asked the reason for this, he had shaken his head and remarked, He should know best! Therefore they walked around the town walls, the seven, to regain the military road at the other end. But then, striking proof was once again afforded that man cannot escape his destiny. For before Mirror-Swabian knew what was happening, a woman bounded out of a hop-garden towards him, a real harridan, and shrieked in a voice that went through bone and marrow: “Are you back here at last, you rascal? Where have you been gadding about all this time, you gallows bird?” Mirror-Swabian’s head began to swim and he thought his end had come, for the old woman was none other than his beloved other half, whom he had walked out on without so much as a by-your-leave when setting out on his travels with the other companions. Here, quick thinking was of the essence, so in a flash he was over into the hop-garden with one bound, to the great merriment of the others, who were splitting their sides with laughter. But the old woman, as swift as a wagtail on her spindly legs, was hot on his heels, and there would without doubt have been a fierce battle between the two had Mirror-Swabian not thought of a knavish trick in the nick of time. He had nothing to carry but the bearskin, and that now did him good service. Hurriedly throwing it over his head and swiftly slipping his hands into its paws, he ran on all fours, exactly like a real live bear; and he ran growling up to his wife, clasped her with his sharp claws and squeezed and hugged her until she nearly lost her senses. The old woman was glad

² “zu Haut und Haar” – this expression comes from medieval law and relates to minor offences (e.g. adultery and blasphemy) which would be punished by flogging in the pillory, whereas “zu Hals und Hand” (lit. “to neck and hand”) referred to major offences such as murder and theft and involved the execution or mutilation of the criminal.

to escape the prankster, who now joyfully left that place with the others. From that hour dates the custom of bad-tempered husbands very frequently being described as “like a bear with a sore head” by their other halves.

“Joy after sorrow!” cried the Allgauer, and he pointed to Leutkirch Gate, where there was a inn, and over its door could be read: “Here we serve March-Beer!” As there was no one among the seven averse to being served a pot of beer, they turned their steps towards the inn in a trice and reached the entrance hall with their spear at the same moment as the fat brewer stepped out the door to cast an eye over the weather. When he caught sight of the band with the fearsome spear, it did not exactly warm the cockles of his heart; however, he quickly doffed his cap and politely asked them what they wanted. “We want to taste a tippie of your beer,” said the Allgauer, and he made a beeline for the tap room with his companions. Then the innkeeper understood that the delegation with the spear had been sent by the Swabian Provincial Government, as happens from time to time, to taste the beer and assay if it is worth its price. So he ran at full gallop to his cellar and fetched up a keg of his best, such as he brewed only for himself and his family. The keg was empty in a twinkling, the second one in even less time, and when the seven had drunk almost a firkin in less than two hours, the innkeeper remarked, He could see that they liked it. But Thunder-Swabian, who was always quick with his tongue, said, “It could be better, if there weren’t too little malt and hops in it.” – “That isn’t true,” replied the innkeeper, who was a wag, “There isn’t too little hops and malt in it - there’s too much water.” Then Thunder-Swabian realised that he had met his match, so he drank another pot and then recited this poem, which

came into his mind:

“In Langensalz, in Langensalz,
(‘In Memmingen,’ I could have said)
They brew three beers all from one malt:
The first is called The Cream of the Crop,
The burgomasters’ favourite drop;
The second brew’s called Middle-Beer,
Served to the common people here;
Swipes³ is the final brew,
Zounds, drink it! – That’s for you!



³ “Washy or turbid or otherwise inferior beer” – *Concise OED*.

Then they all went on their way, and the Memmingen innkeeper swears blind to this day that the band were none other than the Memmingen District Chief Beer Inspectors.

“Joy after sorrow!” the Allgauer had said without reflecting that this wise adage proves well-founded far more often when it is reversed. The adventurous journey of the seven companion was simply destined to proceed under sunshine and rain in turns, so it was really no surprise that the poor company very soon got into another pickle. Their heads were still spinning and whirling from the March-beer they had drunk so excessively when they found spiteful Fate lying in wait. Just as they were passing by Kronburg, the stern Squire looked out of his window. He perhaps felt somewhat uneasy at the sight of the merry troop, who were not, to all outward appearance, passing on their way in all too respectable a manner. Therefore he called for his bailiff and said, “Look to the vagrants over there – a rum crew, I’d say.” The bailiff took seven bulldogs with him, each one of them big enough to fight a bear at a pinch, and went down to give chase to the luckless Swabians. He soon caught up with them, and Thunder-Swabian being his usual snappish self, Herr Holdfast made short work of it and took the band back with him. The Allgauer, it was true, was unwilling to go along so compliantly, but when the dogs snarled ferociously, he lowered the spear and let his ears droop and trotted along at the back. They were now all led in a body before the Squire of Kronburg, who began a strict examination. Lake-Hare acted as the spokesman for the group and truthfully related: How a terrible beast was dwelling in the Lake Constance region, and so they had joined forces from all 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 the “House,” that is, into prison.

“You’ll see in Schnutzleputz’s House,
Many a singing, dancing mouse,
Many a barking snail in the House”⁴

sang Thunder-Swabian in the House, but very quietly, like a mouse. Only the day before, when he had been plagued with the gout, the Squire had formed the commendable resolve to found a House of Correction to the terror of all scoundrels and idlers, to the benefit of the citizenry, and to the enlightenment of the common people. So to his mind, the Seven Swabians came as if called for. Otherwise he was a very pious and gentle lord who did not even fleece his own peasants for more than he needed to keep himself warm in winter. And so he ordered that the prisoners be given food, as much as they needed. However, Mirror-Swabian, who was well-acquainted with him and knew that he kept Old Mother Hubbard’s cupboard and, no doubt, an angry butler,⁵ thereupon laid a plan which he imparted to his companions. So when the bailiff brought a large pan filled with small dumplings, which they call Milk-spaetzle, at midday, Thunder-Swabian said to Knoeple-Swabian, “They must be for you.” The bailiff said there was surely enough for everyone. But Knoeple-Swabian said he’d see if this sufficed for him, and sitting himself down, he ate the

⁴ This song first appeared in 1776. Gustav Mahler gave the name of this house to the hut in Steinbach where he composed in the mid-1890s.

⁵ “An empty cellar makes an angry butler.” The proverb is Danish; the German original has “Schmalhans” (Gaunt Jack/ Skinny Johnny) living in the kitchen and cellar, a reference to the expression, “Bei uns ist Schmalhans Küchenmeister” (Gaunt Jack is our chef = we are on short commons, our cupboards are bare, we are dining with Duke Humphrey).

pan clean on his own, leaving neither scrap nor crumb. The bailiff was alarmed and ran to the Squire, saying they would have to cook a whole brewer's copper of spaetzle at one time for the vagrants, and even that, he thought, would scarcely be enough. So the Squire of and at Kronburg did some hard thinking, and he decided that he did not owe the Swabian Government and mankind so great a sacrifice as to starve himself in his own castle for the sake of a few vagabonds. The seven were set at liberty forthwith – only, the Squire gave them a testimonial to carry with them on the road, to dutifully warn other magistrates and turnkeys of Knoeple-Swabian's great gluttony.

After more than one further adventure which would be too long to tell, the Seven Swabians arrived at a real large lake, and Lake-Hare, who recognised it at once, said, "That's Lake Constance." On its banks, so the legend went, there lived a dangerous monster, which the seven brave Swabians had firmly resolved to fight and to slay. Now when they set eyes on the lake and, at the same time, the forest in which the monster had its home, they did not know if it was a dreadful lindworm or a fire-spitting dragon, so their hearts sank into their boots, they made a halt, and they lit a fire so that Knoepfle-Swabian could prepare a final meal (for who could tell but that the monster would devour them to a man – skin, bones and all – with or without their spear) of knoepfle and spaetzle, and while eating they contemplated death. "Aye," said the Allgauer, fetching a sigh from the bottom of his heart, "It's a rum do, to think we're eating our midday meal for the last time in our lives." And once more he sighed and said, "It's a rum do!" and Knoeple-Swabian began to quietly blubber to himself, without however forgetting his food. But when the Allgauer fetched a dreadfully

deep sigh and said, "It's a rum do!" for the third time, then they all began to blubber and howl so piteously that it would have moved a savage heathen to pity. Only Lace-Swabian was not grieved to the heart at the thought of death, for, he said, "My mother's often told me that my hour would never ever come." Yet he howled along with the company, out of goodwill. But when, at last, they could howl no more, it occurred to them that it was time to arrange their order of battle; which caused all kinds of strife and discord. The Allgauer said that up to now he had always been the foremost, it was time for him to be the hindmost for once, and Thunder-Swabian should lead the way. But that man said, "I've courage enough in my body, but not body enough for my courage and that beast of a monster." Mirror-Swabian wiped his nose on his sleeve and made the suggestion that it would be better, he hoped they would agree, if one of them died for all, and he thought Knoepfle-Swabian could do them this small favour; who screamed blue murder, as if the monster already had him by the scruff of the neck. And so they prattled on and bandied words a while longer, until they came to an amicable agreement and strode swiftly forwards with their spear, straight for the forest where the beast was said to dwell. Before they reached it, they came to a slope where a hare was sitting squat upon its tail, and it stretched its long ears up high, which was a fearful sight for the Swabians; so they checked their pace, took counsel, and deliberated if they should advance and rush upon the monster with their spear stretched far out in front of them, or if they should take to flight; yet every one of them kept a firm grip of the spear. Now as Veitli, being at the back, was the furthest out of harm's way, this went to his head, and he cried to Schulz, who was at the front:

“Thrust hard, in every Swabian’s name,
Or may your limbs go limp and lame!”

Hans, the man in front of Veitli Yellowfooter, the Knoepfle-Swabian, ridiculed Veitli’s courage, saying:

“By God, but you’re a fine one to prattle;
You’re right at the back when we do battle!”

Michel’s courage had caused his hair to stand to end, and he did not look towards the monster but spoke with his face averted, while he raised his sleeve to his face:

“As sure as eggs is eggs, I swear
That it’s the very Devil there!”

Jergli looked in Michel’s face and also did not look towards the raging monster, while he faint-heartedly agreed:

“By Jove! If not him, it’s his mother,
Or the Devil’s own stepbrother!”

Marli the Lace-Swabian, who was quite close to the front of the spear with which the Swabians walked, did not like his place, and he had a good idea; he turned around, as he saw no need to look at the monster, and called to Veitli:

“Go, Veitli, go, you lead the way,
I’ll follow you, as night does day!”

But Veitli pressed his hands against his ears and pretended not to hear; whereupon Marli said to Jackli,

“Go Jackli, go, you be the first!
You’re wearing boots, you’re wearing spurs,
The dragon’s teeth can do their worst!”

But Jackli took comfort in the Allgauer being at the point of the spear, at the head of the Seven Swabians, and at the forefront of the adventure to be undergone, and he said:

“It’s fitting Herr Schulz be our van,
An honour due that very man.”

Schulz the Allgauer took heart and spoke boldly, as it was now simply a case of unavoidable danger:

“Then forward, with stout hearts, to battle,
That’s how the world knows men of mettle!”

And then they were off in God’s name, rushing at the double and at the monster, and Schulz’s heart was thumping so much that he could not fight off his fear, and he yelled, “Hoy heydeehoy! Hoy! Hoyhoy!” The hare was startled and turned tail double quick, running across country as hard as he could. Now Schulz the Allgauer cried out with joy:

“Sblood, Veitli, look, look, see that there?

The monster’s nothing but a hare!”



“Did you see it? Did you see it?” the others now asked one another. “By Thunder! A creature as big as a calf!” cried Thunder-Swabian. Lace-Swabian swore his strongest curse: “By your leave! May a mouse bite you! A beast like a fattened ox!” – “Oho!” cried Knoepfle-Swabian, “An elephant is a mere cat beside that monster.” – “By God,” the Allgauer returned, “if that wasn’t a hare, then I can’t tell Three-Men-Wine from Revenge-Powder!”

“Now, now!” Lake-Hare mediated. “Hare or no hare! A lake-hare is simply greater and grimmer than all the hares in the Holy Roman Empire.” – “Just as the Lake-wine is sourer and tarter than all the wines in the Holy Roman Empire,” Yellowfooter scoffed at the back, and Lake-Hare was close to giving him a slap or two for this taunt, for it deeply wounded him that Veitli should ridicule Lake Wine, which he had savoured from the cradle. With regard to Lake Wine, the facts are as follows: it comes in three kinds, the first of which is Sorrel; it tastes just a little better than vinegar and contorts your mouth only a bit, particularly when you have grown used to it. The second type is called Three-Men-Wine; in taste, it ranks ten levels below vinegar, and it was so christened because, it is said, the man condemned to drink it must be held by two others while a third man pours it down his throat. The third sort is Revenge-Powder; it has the laudable property of expelling phlegm and everything else, 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 may turn over, otherwise the Revenge-Powder might eat a hole in his stomach.

Now as the Seven Swabians had come through the Adventure of the Monster so successfully, they all agreed to henceforth have a rest from their

exploits and peacefully return home. Before that, however, it was necessary to raise a victory monument that would proclaim their triumph to their contemporaries and to posterity till the end of time. Now as it was impossible to do as valiant knights had done in days of yore by hanging a dragon-skin up in a church, no dragon having brought its fell to market and the hare having escaped with its pelt intact, so the boon companions all agreed to donate their bearskin and their spear as a trophy to the nearest chapel, which was afterwards called the Chapel of the Swabian Saviour. The spear doubtless hangs there still today, but moths have eaten the bearskin, and sparrows have borne its hairs to their nests.



1845 version

Once upon a time there were seven Swabians who wished to be great heroes and wander all over the world in search of adventure. And so that they might be well armed, they had a spear made for themselves that was the length of seven men, and the seven of them took hold of it and walked in single file, one behind the other. At the front was Herr Schulz, the Allgauer, as the manliest among them; then came Jackli, called the Lake-Hare; after that Marli, called the Lace-Swabian, who was followed by Jergil, called the Thunder-Swabian; afterwards went Michel, also called Mirror-Swabian, then came Hans, the Knoeple-Swabian, and last of all came Veitli, who was the Yellowfooter. There was a good reason behind every one of these epithets. Herr Schulz was called the Allgauer because he was Allgau-born; the Lake-Hare had resided by the shores of Lake Constance; the Lace-Swabian bore this name because he had laces instead of buttons on his trousers, and was nearly always holding the latter up with his hand as a result of the laces oftentimes having torn off. The Thunder-Swabian was so called because he was accustomed to use the phrase, "By Thunder!" The Mirror-Swabian had the habit of invariably wiping his nose on the front sleeves of his jacket, which took therefrom a certain glassy gleam that procured him this neat name. Knoeple-Swabian was a man who knew how to cook good knoeple or spaetzle, that is *Knötel* in Bavarian German and *Klöße* in Saxon German. The Yellowfooter, finally, came from down Bopfingen way, whose inhabitants are called Yellowfooters by their neighbours for the following reason: once, they wanted to cram a cartload of eggs, which they had to take to their duke as a tax, as full as possible, and to this end they trod on the eggs so firmly that

the eggs were rather a little smashed and the Bopfingers' feet were yellowed.

Now the seven set out with their spear, in good spirits every one, and at dusk one day in the haymaking month they were walking over a green meadow when, no great distance away from them, a hornet rose up with a hostile buzzing from behind a briar hedge and flew past. This gave Schulz, the Allgauer, a mighty shock, and he began to sweat a cold sweat, almost lost his grip of the spear, and yelled to his comrades-in-arms, "Hark! Hark! The enemy's drumming!" Then Jackli, who was walking close behind Schulz, smelt a foul odour and cried, "Indeed! Indeed! Something's near at hand! I can smell the powder!" Then Herr Schulz took to his heels, letting the spear fall to the ground, and leapt over a fence, but he happened to land on the teeth of a rake, and the handle sprang up into his face giving him a mighty clout. Schulz, thinking that the Devil was pitching into him, yelled out, "Have mercy! I surrender!" The other six had jumped over the fence after him, and when they heard their leader yelling in this way, they all yelled, "If you surrender, I surrender too! If you surrender, I surrender too!" But there was no one around who wanted to take the Seven Swabians captive, and when they realised this, they were ashamed of their scant courage, and they swore not to breathe a word to anyone of this first heroic exploit of theirs.

After this, the Seven Swabians' campaign brought them to a narrow pass, and as they marched towards it as brave as you please, they did not notice that an enormous bear was lying in the way until the Allgauer was almost upon it. When he saw the bear, he was frantic with fear, he stumbled, and unable to stop himself, thrust the spear straight at the bear, and yowled

to high heaven, “A bear! A bear!” He thought his last loaf had been baked and eaten. Yet the bear did not stir, from being stone dead. Delighted at this, the Allgauer looked around at his brethren, and was horrified anew to see them all lying on the ground dead quiet, and apparently quietly dead; he thought he had stabbed them to death with a backwards thrust of the spear, and he started to wail. When those lying on the ground realised that the bear had not devoured the Allgauer – for they had only tumbled down from shock – they cautiously looked up, and seeing that the bear was dead, they got up, hale and hearty, walked around the bear and over it, and would have investigated the depth of the wound that the spear had inflicted on him – but they could not find one, and the Thunder-Swabian said, “By Thunder! The bear has snuffed it and been dead a long time!” – “Indeed,” said Jackli, “I thought I smelt a rat.” They all agreed to remove the bear’s skin and carry it with them as a token of victory but to leave the carcass lying where it was. “May the sheep now eat the bear, as he formerly ate the sheep!” said one of them, and so they continued on their way with their bearskin and their spear.

And then it happened that the boon companions continued their journey till they came to a wide blue lake, as it seemed to them – for the light had grown somewhat dim by this time – whose waves billowed in the wind; and the Seven Swabians stood at the top of its slope and looked down, seeking the quickest way to cross this lake. However, there was no water down below, but a field full of flax, which was just then in its fullest, bluest bloom.

“By Thunder!” cried Thunder-Swabian. “What’s to be done here? We must get across the wild water!”

“Allgauer, you carry us over, as St. Christopher erstwhile carried the pilgrims!” said Lake-Hare. – “By God!” the Allgauer replied, “I’d go into the water all right, if it went no higher than my neck.” Lace-Swabian grasped the waistband of his trousers with one hand, holding on to the noble garment to keep it from slipping off while he was swimming with the other hand; to Knoeple-Swabian, this was by no means a matter of indifference: he looked closely to see if there were any sharks, whales, or crocodiles churning the water; and the others stood there too, quite at a loss what to do, until Thunder-Swabian slipped around the back of them and pushed a few of them down, crying out, “He who dares, swims!” As they did not go under, Yellowfooter took heart and hopped down, Thunder-Swabian and Lace-Swabian followed him with more confidence, and last of all the Allgauer rode down on the spear; and down below, they flopped one on top of the other, until they realised that they had fallen flat on their faces in green grass, and one by one they picked themselves up, with rather crushed ribs, and strode onwards with the spear once again.

After more than one further adventure which would be too long to tell, the Seven Swabians arrived at a real large lake, and Lake-Hare, who recognised it at once, said, “That’s Lake Constance.” On its banks, so the legend went, there lived a dangerous monster, which the seven brave Swabians had firmly resolved to fight and to slay. Now when they set eyes on the lake and, at the same time, the forest in which the monster had its home, they did not know if it was a dreadful lindworm or a fire-spitting dragon, so their hearts sank into their boots, they made a halt, and they lit a fire so that Knoepfle-Swabian could prepare a final meal (for who could tell but that the monster would devour them to a man – skin, bones and all –

with or without their spear) of knoepfle and spaetzle, and while eating they contemplated death. And after this they began to arrange their order of battle, which gave rise to all manner of tension and discord. The Allgauer said that up to now he had always been the foremost, it was time for him to be the hindmost for once, and Thunder-Swabian should lead the way. But that man said, "I've courage enough in my body, but not body enough for my courage and that beast of a monster." Mirror-Swabian wiped his nose on his sleeve and made the suggestion that it would be better, he hoped they would agree, if one of them died for all, and he thought Knoepfle-Swabian could do them this small favour; who screamed blue murder, as if the monster already had him by the scruff of the neck. And so they prattled on and bandied words a while longer, until they came to an amicable agreement and strode swiftly forwards with their spear, straight for the forest where the beast was said to dwell. Before they reached it, they came to a slope where a hare was sitting squat upon its tail, and it stretched its long ears up high, which was a fearful sight for the Swabians; so they checked their pace, took counsel, and deliberated if they should advance and rush upon the monster with their spear stretched far out in front of them, or if they should take to flight; yet every one of them kept a firm grip of the spear. Now as Veitli, being at the back, was the furthest out of harm's way, this went to his head, and he cried to Schulz, who was at the front:

"Thrust hard, in every Swabian's name,
Or may your limbs go limp and lame!"

Hans, the man in front of Veitli Yellowfooter, the Knoepfle-Swabian, ridiculed Veitli's courage, saying:

"By God, but you're a fine one to prattle;

You're right at the back when we do battle!"

Michel's courage had caused his hair to stand to end, and he did not look towards the monster but spoke with his face averted, while he raised his sleeve to his face:

"As sure as eggs is eggs, I swear

That it's the very Devil there!"

Jergli looked in Michel's face and also did not look towards the raging monster, while he faint-heartedly agreed:

"By Jove! If not him, it's his mother,

Or the Devil's own stepbrother!"

Marli the Lace-Swabian, who was quite close to the front of the spear with which the Swabians walked, like a bevy of larks on a spit, did not like his place, and he had a good idea; he turned around, as he did not find it necessary to look at the monster, and called to Veitli:

"Go, Veitli, go, you lead the way,

I'll follow you, as night does day!"

But Veitli pressed his hands against his ears and pretended not to hear; whereupon Marli said to Jackli,

"Go Jackli, go, you be the first!

You're wearing boots, you're wearing spurs,

The dragon's teeth can do their worst!"

But Jackli took comfort in the Allgauer being at the point of the spear, at the head of the Seven Swabians, and at the forefront of the adventure to be undergone, and he said:

"It's fitting Herr Schulz be our van,

An honour due that very man."

Schulz the Allgauer took heart and spoke boldly, as it was now simply a case of unavoidable danger:

“Then forward, with stout hearts, to battle,
That’s how the world knows men of mettle!”

And then they were off in God’s name, rushing at the double and at the monster, and Schulz’s heart was thumping so much that he could not fight off his fear, and he yelled, “Hoy heydeehoy! Hoy! Hoyhoy!” The hare was startled and turned tail double quick, running across country as hard as he could. Now Schulz the Allgauer cried out with joy:

“‘Sblood, Veitli, look, look, see that there?
The monster’s nothing but a hare!”

“Did you see it? Did you see it?” the others now asked one another. “By Thunder! A creature as big as a calf!” cried Thunder-Swabian. Lace-Swabian swore his strongest curse: “By your leave! May a mouse bite you! A beast like a fattened ox!” – “Oho!” cried Knoepfle-Swabian, “A helifant is a mere cat beside that monster.” – “By God,” the Allgauer returned, “if that wasn’t a hare, then I can’t tell Three-Men-Wine from Revenge-Powder!”

“Now, now!” Lake-Hare mediated. “Hare or no hare! A lake-hare is simply greater and grimmer than all the hares in the Holy Roman Empire.” – “Just as the Lake-wine is sourer and tarter than all the wines in the Holy Roman Empire,” Yellowfooter scoffed at the back, and Lake-Hare was close to giving him a slap or two for this taunt, for his national pride was wounded.

Now as the Seven Swabians had come through the Adventure of the Monster so successfully, they all agreed to henceforth have a rest from their exploits and peacefully return home. Before that, however, it was necessary

to raise a victory monument that would proclaim their triumph to their contemporaries and to posterity till the end of time. Now as it was impossible to do as valiant knights had done in days of yore by hanging a dragon-skin up in a church, no dragon having brought its fell to market and the hare having escaped with its pelt intact, so the boon companions all agreed to donate their bearskin and their spear as a trophy to the nearest chapel, which was afterwards called the Chapel of the Swabian Saviour. The spear doubtless hangs there still today, but moths have eaten the bearskin, and sparrows have borne its hairs to their nests.