

**What Daddy tells us  
about France**

## **ADOLF KLAUS SCHRÖDER, M. D.**

Adolf Klaus Schröder, M.D., was born March 18, 1908 in Itzehoe/Holstein. His father taught sports and religion in the local high school (German: Gymnasium). Both parents were athletic types and brought up their children, Adolf jr. and his younger sister, accordingly. Adolf sr. was a fine painter as well, Adolf jr. inherited that talent. Adolf Klaus who was known for his good singing voice as well attended the high school where his father was teaching.

At the time World War II began Adolf was a student of medicine at the renowned university hospital called Charité in Berlin. His teacher was the legendary Professor Ferdinand Sauerbruch, one of the leading surgeons of that era. Sauerbruch acknowledged Adolf's medical talent and hired him to work on his staff when Adolf had completed his studies.

Alfred Fikentscher, Medical Chief of the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) advised Adolf to join the Navy which Adolf did. And he introduced Adolf to a distant relative of his, Austrian Liselotte. Adolf and Liselotte got engaged and married in Dezember of 1940 in her home



town of Klagenfurt, Austria. The couple had two children during the war. The first daughter was born in 1941 during an air raid on Berlin, in the basement of the Charité. The couple lived in Berlin-Wilmersdorf at the time, but their apartment was destroyed during that same air raid. That is why Liselotte and their daughter soon moved to Klagenfurt while Adolf continued to serve in the Berlin hospital. During the war the couple saw each other only when he was on leave.

Officially Adolf was a soldier, serving as a staff surgeon (Stabsarzt). But he was not sent to the frontline, obviously because he was needed on the staff of the Charité. The situation changed in 1944 when Adolf was called for front duty in France, serving on a navy hospital ship. More than once he experienced that the vessels he

was serving on were hit by enemy fire, causing them to sink. He survived, and after such an assault off the Gironde mouth near Royan/Charente-Maritime he was taken prisoner in 1945.

As a prisoner of war he worked as a camp physician in two Allied POW camps, consecutively. Later he told his daughter that he witnessed German POWs being tortured by the Allied camp staff. The prisoners were beaten, or salt was applied to their feet, and goats were brought in to lick their feet until they were bleeding.

Adolf helped his comrades as best he could. Soon German POWs were sent home, but Adolf was forced to stay even when the camps were abolished. The reason was that he had a reputation as a superior surgeon, and the French population was in dire need of his help as well. He was simply forced to treat local patients until he was no longer needed. His special expertise was treating head wounds, maybe he performed plastic surgery on patients whose faces had been maimed by shrapnel etc. But he also treated 'normal' patients and minutely recorded their precarious weight loss during these years of deprivation and famine.

During this second period he officially remained a POW, of course, but his personal situation changed to the better: He was sent to Angoulême/Charente where he worked for a longer time. Though he was constantly supervised and had to report any planned excursions to another town etc., he still was able to live comfortably, under the circumstances. He was assigned a little house for himself and could visit other cities and places in the department. The food was very good compared to the previous camp situation. And he now was allowed to write letters home to his family and create watercolor pictures with legends in rhymes that explained to his children what had happened to him. For lack of material he used cardboard and odd scraps of paper to fashion the picture books, binding them together with adhesive tape from his medical kit. After 70 years the books are still in very solid condition.

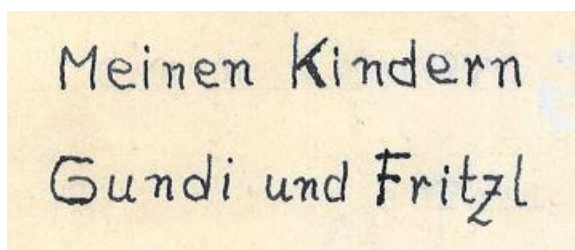
Late in 1948, years after his comrades had returned home, Adolf was reunited with his family in Austria. With his wife he planned to establish a practice in Bad Reichenhall/Bavaria but was not able to obtain a license. That is why he soon left his family again and returned to his parents in Itzehoe – presumably it was easier for him to obtain a doctor's license, being a native of that town. In the summer of 1949 he substituted for two doctors in Ratzeburg and Mölln/Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany. In Itzehoe he then rented two rooms, offering his services as an otolaryngologist (ear-nose-throat specialist). The address was Timm-Kröger-Strasse 12, across the street from his parents' apartment in Liliencronstrasse 1. During this time he lived with his parents.

A couple of years later Adolf moved his offices to a newly built house in Adolf-Rohde-Strasse 5, just a block away. Only at that time he was permanently reunited with his family – actually the couple were able to have a normal married life about one third of their 15 years of marriage. A second daughter was born in 1953. Adolf continued to treat patients with ear-nose-throat problems, and since he was a highly skilled surgeon he also did some plastic surgery, correcting protruding ears or deformed noses.

In 1956 Adolf developed cancer. He died on January 11, 1957, aged 48.

Adolf kept the records of his French patients and took them home to Germany. But he never looked at them again, and the family discarded them when, a few years after Adolf's death, they left their home for a new location. Adolf was never eager to talk about his war and POW experiences, but in more relaxed situations, in intimate conversations, he would recollect details of his odyssey. Thanks to those memories we can share his story today.

### English version of Adolf Schröder's verses by Andreas Kern 2022



Meinen Kindern  
Gundi und Fritzl

To my children Gundi and Fritzl
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Ihr lieben Kinder seht mal an:  
Dies hier ist die Stadt Royan.  
Sie liegt in Frankreich am Meeresstrand  
Mit grünen Hügeln und gelbem Sand.

- 1 -

My dearest children, take a look:  
France is the subject of this book.  
The town of Royan on the coast,  
green hills and fine sand I love most.



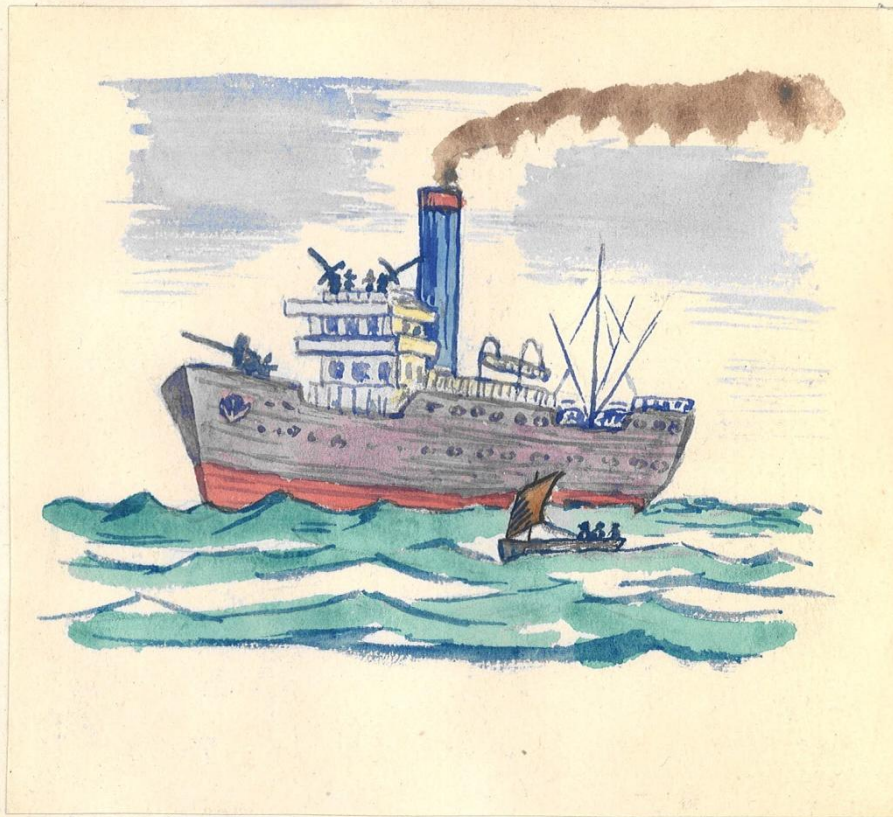


In diesem Häuschen, klimperklein,  
Wohnt' ich lange Zeit allein,  
Konnte spazierengehn, baden und malen  
Und wohllich mich in der Sonne aalen.

- 2 -

For some time in this tiny house  
I used to live and did not grouse,  
Was free to walk and swim and paint,  
Bask in the sun without restraint.





Doch bald war's mit der Ruhe aus.  
Verlassen musst ich das schöne Haus.  
Ich fuhr mit einem Kriegsschiff fort,  
Weil man als Arzt mich braucht'an Bord.

But soon did end this calm reprieve.  
That pretty house I had to leave.  
On board a war ship I proceeded  
Since as a doctor I was needed.





Schon kamen Flieger mit Gebrumm  
Und warfen Bomben ringsherum,  
Die meisten fielen in das Meer  
Und mancher Flieger hinterher.

- 4 -

Then soaring airplanes did resound  
Aiming and dropping bombs around.  
Most of those fell into the swell  
Followed by several planes as well.





Doch einer hat das Schiff getroffen.  
Es brannte und ist abgesoffen.  
Die Mannschaft ruderte an Land,  
Wo jeder seine Rettung fand.

The ship was hit, the sea, it churned  
The vessel sank whereas it burned.  
In boats each sailor pulled his oar  
And all reached safety on the shore.





Ich zog in ein schönes Schloss.  
Weil die Zahl der Kranken gross,  
Hab' ich hieraus mit Bedacht  
Schnell ein Lazarett gemacht.

I moved into a fine chateau.  
So many patients did I know  
That I did tarry not at all:  
I named it Army Hospital.





Der Seemann Daddel ist getroffen,  
Man sieht, sein linkes Bein ist offen.  
Der Arzt die Wunde ihm vernäht,  
Die Schwester ihm zur Seite steht.

Daddel the sailor has been hit,  
His leg is bleeding, look at it.  
The doc dresses the wound with stitches,  
The nurse assists him when he itches.





Dies ist ein Franzosenkind  
Vom Royaner Strande.  
Ja, so hübsch und niedlich sind  
Die Mädchen hierzulande.

This native girl, fresh as a peach,  
resides close to the Royan beach.  
Pretty they are, we have no doubts,  
the fairest maidens hereabouts.





Auf diesem Bilde könnt ihr seh'n  
Den Schäfer auf zwei Stelzen geh'n,  
Weil er sonst einsinkt im tiefen Moor;  
Bei Schafen kommt das nur selten vor.

The shepherd's means of transportation?  
You see his stilts for demonstration.  
Without he'd sink into the swamp;  
His sheep don't sink, they run and romp.

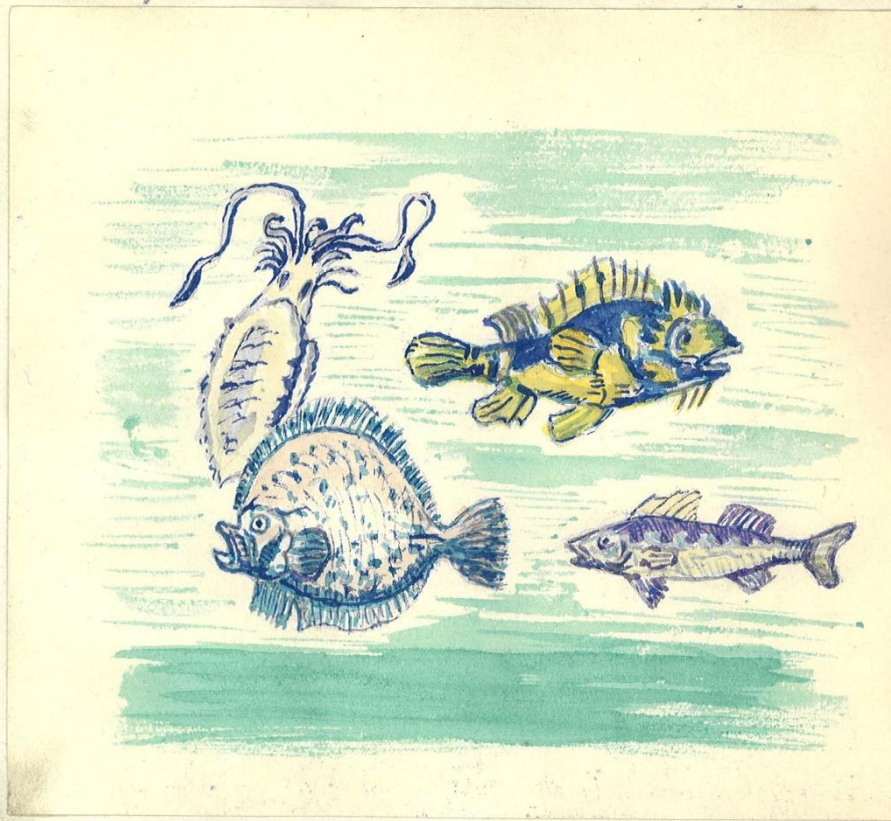




Die Fischersfrau am Strande harrt,  
Bis dass ihr Mann zurück von Fahrt,  
Damit er ihre Sehnsucht stillt,  
Den Leeren Korb mit Fischen füllt.

The fisher's wife waits till she learns  
That her dear husband's boat returns,  
Hopes he will grant her deepest wish,  
Put in her basket lots of fish.





Knurrhahn, Tintenfisch und Flunder  
Samt Makrele sind recht munter,  
Bis der Fischer voller Freude  
Sie nach Hause bringt als Beute.

Gunard, flounder, mackerel squirm —  
up hauls the fisher fast and firm.  
For days he had to toil and roam  
Until his spoils are beached at home.





Nie hätte der brave Fischer gedacht,  
Dass er je einen solchen Fang gemacht.  
Mit sausender Fahrt geht es jetzt los,  
Das Schifflein ist klein, die Angst ist gross.

Never the fisher did dream this:  
To see a catch this size is bliss.  
The prey though makes a run for it,  
The boat is small – so is the grit.

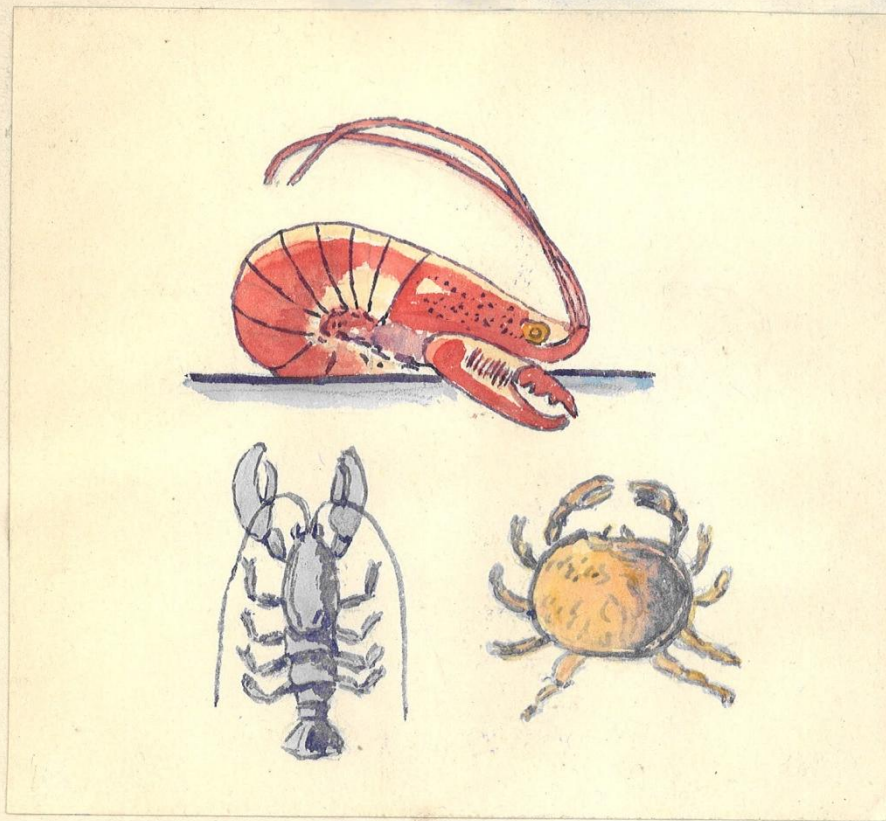




Dem Koch tut grosse Freude winken:  
Es ruckt gewaltig an seinem Zinken!  
Doch, so scheint's, will der fette Schmaus  
Nur ungern aus dem Wasser raus.

The cook foresees a great delight:  
Someone is hooked, someone will fight!  
The treat is tasty but unwilling,  
Its natural realm is just too thrilling.





Hummer ist was für Geniesser.  
So ein stolzer Kerl wie dieser  
In seinem scharlachroten Frack  
Ist ganz vorzüglich von Geschmack.

Lobsters excite the connoisseur.  
Proud specimens as you see here,  
When in a scarlet frock for favor,  
Promise to be of superb flavor.





Auch Austern, nein man glaubt es kaum,  
Austern sind des Schlemmers Traum.  
O könnt' er von den köstlichen Dingen  
Eine ganze Platte voll verschlingen!

- 15 -

Hard to believe, but gourmets beam:  
These oysters are their yummy dream.  
All they desire is to eat  
A luscious plateful – and repeat!





Zum Nachtisch werden Früchte gereicht,  
Wie man sie hier im Bilde zeigt.  
Für artige Kinder, die hier wohnen,  
Gibt's Feigen, Pfirsich und Melonen.

The fruits you see here will be served  
To well-bred children, if deserved.  
This is the dessert they wish for:  
Figs, peaches, melons by the score.





Hier wo die Frauen nett und fein  
Wächst auch der allerbeste Wein.  
So gut wie gerade bei Bordeaux  
Ist er wohl nirgends anderswo.

— 17 —

The ladies' conduct, nice and fine  
Also affects the famous wine:  
The vineyards all around Bordeaux  
The best of qualities bestow.





Dieses hier ist kaum zu glauben:  
Sah man je so grosse Trauben?  
Die beiden Männer stöhnen sehr,  
Die Last ist viele Zentner schwer.

—18—

Did e'er you see huge grapes like these?  
We don't believe it, we feel teased.  
The men are bound to groan and moan,  
The weight they lift is 100 stone.

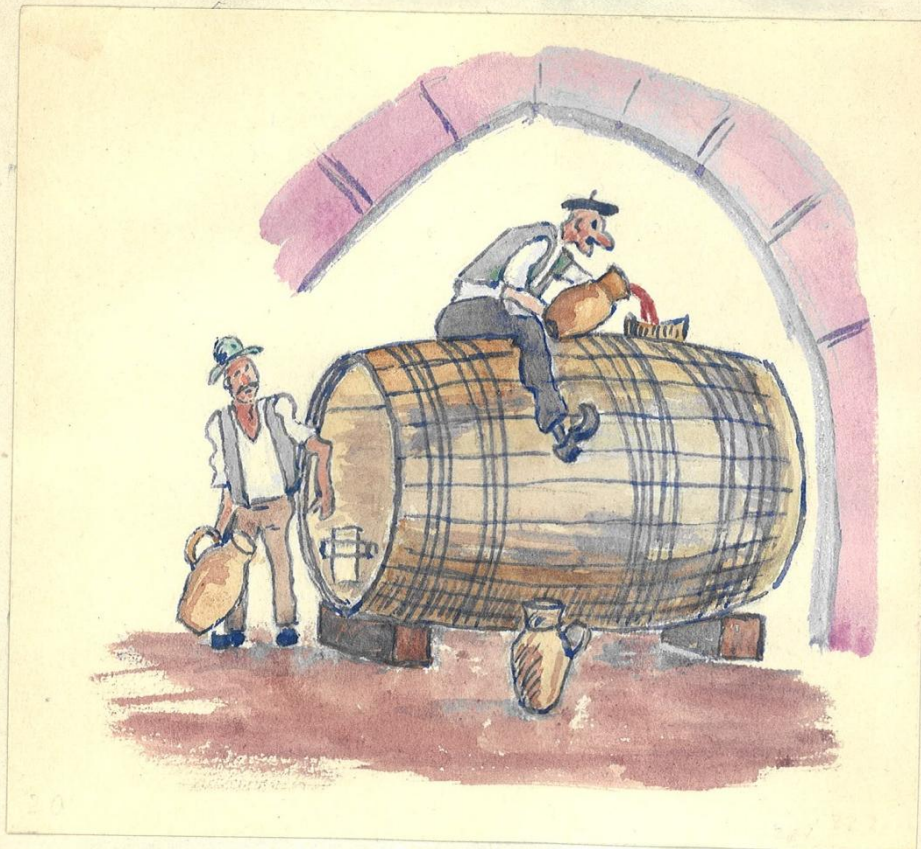




Die Trauben hier sind auch nicht übel.  
Man pflückt sie nun in grosse Kübel,  
Trägt sie zum Wagen dann heran  
Und vorne spannt man Ochsen an.

These grapes here are so sweet, as well.  
The picker puts them in his pail,  
all pails are used to fill a cask  
to pull which is the oxen's task.

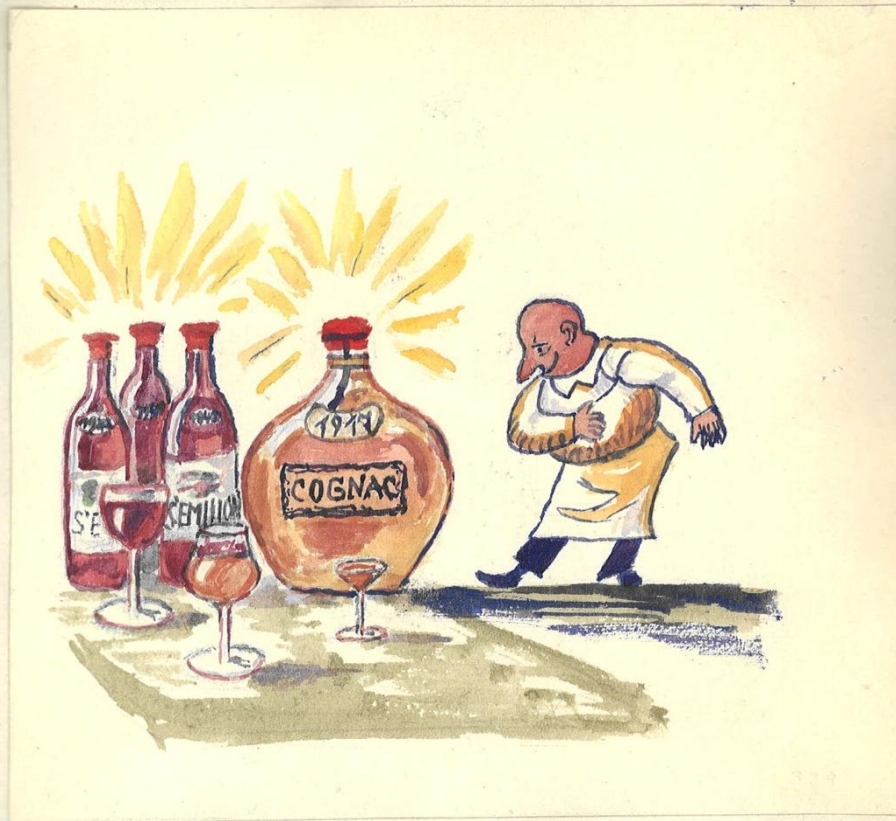




Ist angelangt die Fuhr' zu Haus,  
Presst man die Trauben gründlich aus  
Und giesst den Saft - o welche Wonne -  
Im Keller in 'ne grosse Tonne.

When all the grapes at home arrive  
They're promptly pressed with force and drive.  
The precious juice - which we exalt -  
Fills massive barrels in the vault.





Nachdem er jahrelang geruht  
Bekommt er Blume und wird gut.  
Zuletzt besieht voll Freud und Glück  
Der Küfer dann sein Meisterstück.

- 21 -

For several years the wine will rest  
Until its fine bouquet we'll test.  
The masterpiece is now perfected,  
The vintner's joy fully effected.





Der Bauer und die Bäuerin  
Die gehn zum Winzerfeste hin.  
Jeder hat sich fein gemacht.  
Seht nur, wie man tanzt und lacht.

The peasant and his wife won't miss  
A merry wine fest such as this.  
Dressed in their finest garb they dance,  
Look at them how they laugh and prance.



Dieser gute alte Mann  
Bietet euch Kastanien an,  
Die er schon für einen Dreier  
Lächelnd holet aus dem Feuer.

This old and honest man will hail  
To everyone: Chestnuts for sale.  
For two bits he will nod and smile  
And pick them from the smoldering pile.





Der böse Jäger voller List  
Rum-bum auf dieses Häslein schießt.  
Zum Glück hat er es nicht getroffen,  
Voll Freud ist Lampe weggeoffen.

This evil hunter, out for money  
Won't hesitate to shoot that bunny.  
As fortune has it Master Hare  
Grins widely and escapes the blare.





Der Bauer will das Schwein verkaufen,  
Muss damit in die Stadt reinlaufen,  
Er zieht's am Bein hinter sich her,  
Das Schwein jedoch das schreit gar sehr.

My pig, the farmer says, I'll hawk.  
But to the town it's quite a walk,  
He drags it by its leg – a strife:  
The pig resists and cries for life.



Gretl, Gretl Schwänzchen,  
Was machen deine Gänschen?  
Sie rupfen Gras wohl hier und dort,  
Meinem Stock gehorchen sie aufs Wort.

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Gretel, Gretel Piggytail,  
Are all these goslings your avail?  
They eat the grass where it is greener  
And yield my lifted stick much keener.





Die gute Kuh, sie macht muh, muh,  
Und lässt auf die Weide sich treiben.  
Sie gibt uns Milch und Butter dazu,  
Drum mögen wir sie gern leiden.

"Moos" are the seasoned bovine's sounds,  
she loves to scour her pasture's bounds,  
Provides us milk and even cheese  
That's why her kind will always please.



Und so gibt's noch viele Dinge,  
Die ihr in dem Buch nicht seht,  
Die ich euch persönlich bringe,  
Wenn's für mich mal heimwärts geht.

—

But listen up! There's many a thing  
That's not included in this tome.  
Plenty of those to you I'll bring  
When it is my time to come home.