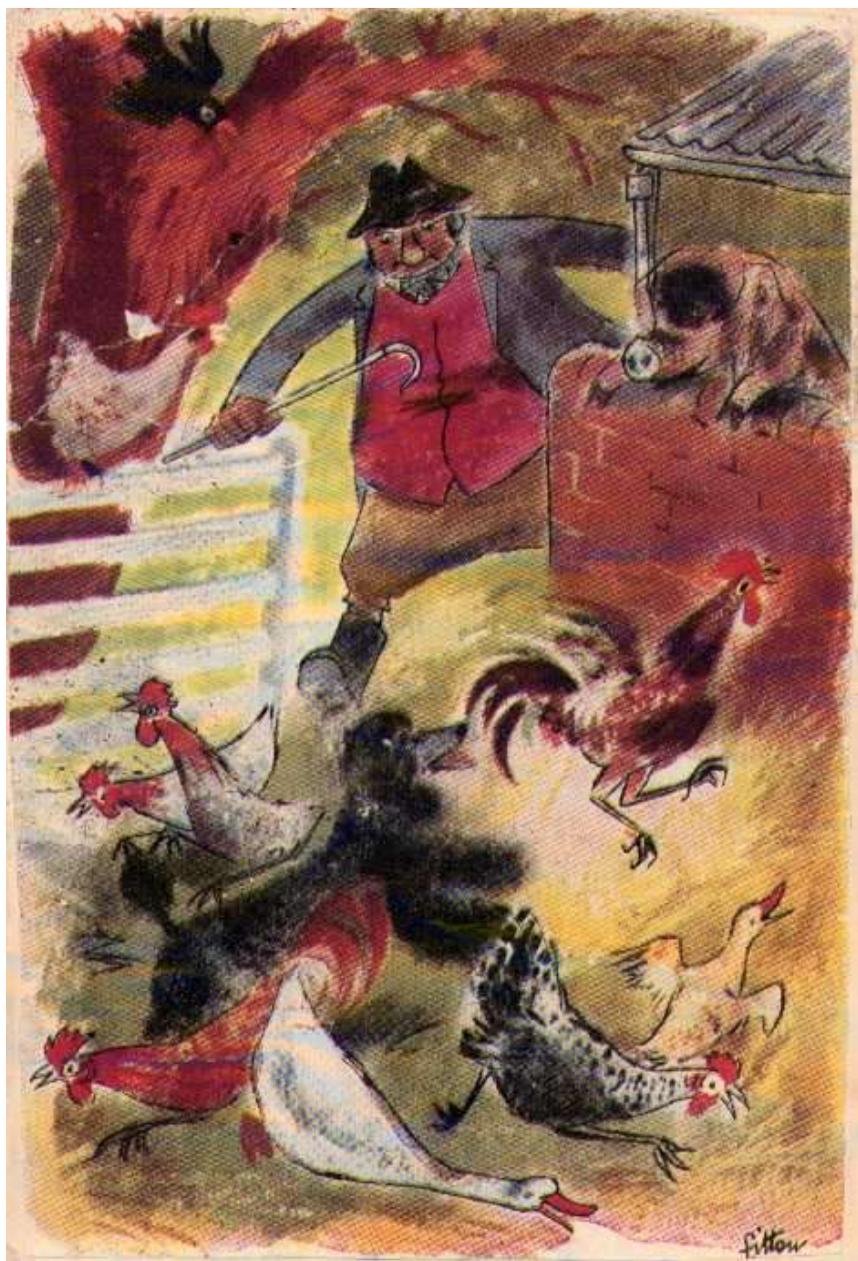


Geschichte
des
Kleinen Herbert

Brigitte Schaper
LITTLE HERBERT

Once upon a time, there was a little boy whose name was Herbert. He lived with his father, his mother, a little black dog, a kitten, and many chicken, geese, ducks and pigs in a little house on a huge meadow next to a forest. His father owned a big saw mill and was gone all day, but his mother was always there and would listen to his worries, attend to his needs and share in his joy. The house was surrounded by a garden, but Herbert preferred to roam the meadow and, together with his dog, he discovered a world of adventure. His little dog was very curious and poked his nose under every withered leaf and in every heap of earth, so little Herbert called him “Muffi”.

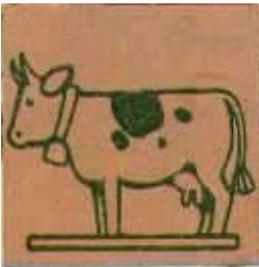




LITTLE HERBERT DRIVES TO TOWN



Little Herbert was busy feeding his rabbits in the stable, he quickly dropped everything. He didn't even cry when his mother washed him, and he didn't fidget around when she changed his clothes. She packed some special things for Aunt Irene: a piece of butter and a big piece of a ham. Long before Mr. Mueller's car arrived, little Herbert was already waiting at the front door ready to leave on his trip. What a wonderful drive it was, everything was passing by so quickly. When something caught his attention, it was already gone before he could take a good look.





One time, five deer crossed the street, this was such an event, little Herbert didn't know how to contain his joy.

Then his father told him of earlier times when there were no cars to travel comfortably over smooth, beautiful streets; instead one would travel for days in horse carriages over bumpy roads. There were pot holes on the streets, and if the coach man didn't pay attention, the carriage could tip over. The people inside the carriage would tumble on top of each other, suitcases would fall down on them, and people would get bruised and bloody noses. Father could tell many such stories, so time flew by and before Herbert realized it, he could already see the houses in the town.

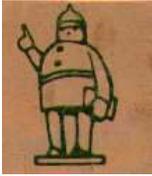


Little Herbert had never seen anything like it. A big river passed by the town, and separated in a little stream, which then passed through the old part of town past old warehouses; big cranes glided by on the river. Oh, so many people! Did they all know where they lived? And what about all the little boys running in the street! Where they not afraid?

The car stopped and Father went with Herbert into a big, dark house. There was a strange, sour smell. From a small office they were guided into a big room. How interesting this was! While Father was busy talking to a man in a long leather apron, little Herbert had time and peace to look at everything. The humming of machines, the sound of voices, the sight of many barrels, and a deafening sound made little Herbert all dizzy. He never thought that the city could be so much fun.



When they stepped back onto the street, they felt blinded by the sunlight; it had been so dark in the basement. They continued their journey by car. A fat policeman stood in the middle of the road stretching out his arms. He too was not afraid of the cars. A chimney sweep sat on a roof sweeping the chimney. “I wonder what the town looks like from above?” little Herbert thought to himself.



“We have to go to the next village before we will visit my sister,” said Father to Mr. Mueller, “then I have completed everything I have to do, and I can stay with her until we go home.”



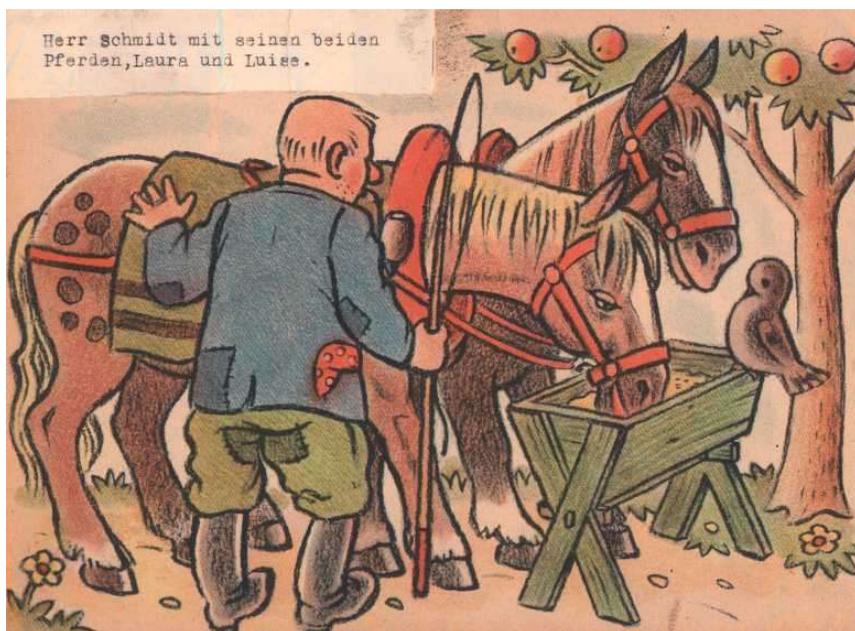
So they left the town, and pulled over in front of a little country pub. “Here you can have a bite to eat with your son, Mr. Mueller, until I return.” “Listen, Herbert, do not get close to the car while Mr. Mueller is gone. Otherwise I will get very upset.” Little Herbert made a promise to his father who left. Mr. Mueller and Herbert went into the pub and ordered a refreshing drink, which little Herbert soon finished. His father became engaged in a conversation with the pub owner and soon Herbert got bored.



He went outside to check if there was anything special to see. But nothing happened at all, only a dog stood on his doghouse with his eyes fixed on Herbert. Little Herbert casually went to the car, sat on the driver’s seat and touched the gear stick and moved some knobs.



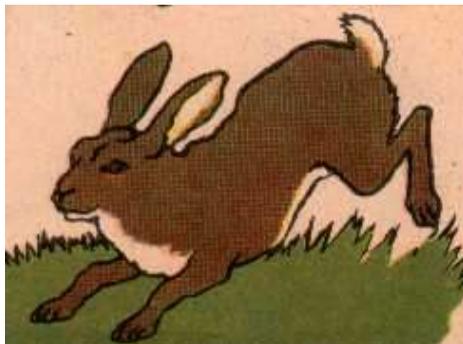
Suddenly the car started to tremble and little Herbert got a huge fright. At that instant Mr. Mueller leaped out of the house, pulled the gear stick back into its place, grabbed Herbert and gave him a spanking. Father arrived and Mr. Mueller apologized, and with embarrassment he recounted what had happened. But Father only said, "You did right, Mr. Mueller", and turning to Herbert he continued, "your punishment is that you are not allowed to visit Aunt Irene. Give me your backpack. Mr. Smith over there will take you home in his horse carriage." He crossed the street to talk to Mr. Smith who immediately gave his consent to do so.



Mr. Smith together with his two horses, Laura and Luise



Before he realized what was happening, little Herbert was placed next to Mr. Smith. The return journey took place at a much slower pace than by car. “Little boy, you must not do something like that; if you drive the car against a tree, you can break your neck,” the farmer said to the crying Herbert. To console him, he told him of his four children, Lene, Liese, Otto and Erna. They also got a spanking when they misbehaved. Herbert noticed a Hare crossing the street, and his tears soon dried up.



At home mother was surprised that her son returned so soon, especially since he did not mention certain details of his trip. But she soon painted a picture to herself of what had happened. Because her son showed a lot of remorse, after extracting a promise that he would never again go into a car by himself, she consoled him with a big plate of pudding.



The little boy was allowed to wait for his father to ask him if everything was alright again, because he always wanted to obey his father in the future.

He sat with Lotte on the bench in front of his house and together they counted the stars and said good night to the moon.



Notes:

The story of Little Herbert was written over fifty years ago, around 1947/48. The author was my mother, Brigitte Schaper, and as a child, she read it to me over and over. When she was busy, I asked one of the other adults in the house to read it to me, but, of course, they could never tell it quite the same way my mother did.

After WWII, it was a time of hardship; everything was in short supply, including paper for books (for example there was no paper to issue my baptism certificate in 1946, and on all official stamps were the Hakenkreuz once was, it was now blanked out with a white marking. Because there were no children's books available, my mother wrote her story with a typewriter, collected pictures for illustration, and bound it herself.

The story in this book is authentic for its time. Corporal punishment by "Mr. Mueller", a stranger, would be non comprehensible nowadays. "He gave him a spanking", and Father's comments, "you did right," was common practice in many families and even in schools, therefore it was very believable to us children. However, I can assure you that we were never submitted to any spanking, nor were our ears ever pulled.

In the years of my early childhood, I loved this book to death. To this day, it has a place of honour in my bookshelves right next to my desk.

Many thanks to my sister Veronika Crawford, born Schaper for translating *Little Herbert* into english and her daughter Stephanie for final proof read. I presume, that Stephanie's little son Alexander will be the first to listen to this tale in english. Perhaps on his first birthday on July 16th this year?

Jost Schaper
Pyrmont, July 6th, 2007

