

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Bird Holgott and Bird Mosam**



There was a lake, into which flowed lively streams, in which lived shoals of fish, and which was located in a remote region never visited by men, nor grey herons, nor other fish-eating birds from the sea. A bird of advanced years called Holgott discovered this lake; he belonged to the osprey species, and he liked the pleasant location, the peaceful calm around the lake, and the abundance of food. And he thought to himself: you will move here with your wife and all your family, for here we shall find enough of everything we need, here no one is antagonistic and averse to me, and my children may, when we are dead, possess this area as a handsome inheritance. Now Bird Holgott had a wife; she was sitting at home in the nest on her eggs, which were almost ready to hatch, and this wife had a dear friend, also a bird, whose name was Mosam. This friend was so dear to her that her food and drink lost their taste when he was not by her, and nothing could please or amuse her unless he were there. Now when her husband revealed his counsel and decision to move to that fair region, but strictly forbade her to mention this to her friend Mosam, it grieved her terribly, and she began to devise plots and contrivances for privily communicating to her friend this intention of her husband without Volgott realising. And so she said to her husband, “Look, my dear Holgott, our

young will soon hatch out, and I have been told of a valuable medicine that is to be used on the young as they crawl out to make their feathers grow strong and firm; this medicine also protects them from mishaps throughout their lives. Now, I would like to fetch this medicine if you will permit me and it is acceptable to you!”

“What kind of arcanum is this?” asked Bird Holgott, and his wife replied: “It is a fish in a lake whose waters flow around an island, and no one knows of the lake save I and the one who told me the secret. That is why I advise and beseech you to sit on the eggs and brood in my stead, and in the meantime I shall fetch one or two of the fish, and then we shall take them with us to the place you have chosen for our new abode.”

The husband replied: “It does not become a sensible man to try everything that the first doctor he comes to advises; for many recommend to us things that are impossible to obtain. What does the lion’s tallow* avail the invalid, or the viper’s venom? Should one encounter the lion, and visit the viper in her cave, risking the danger of one’s own death, on the advice of a doctor? Desist, O wife, from your foolish intention, and let us move to that place while our young stay here; there you will find fish of various kinds, perhaps also that salubrious one, and no one will know of it save ourselves. He who seeks his healing herb in fearful, dangerous places may fare as the old monkey fared.” “What befell him?” asked the birdwife, and Bird Holgott told the tale

Next: *Of Two Monkeys*

* “[I]t has been notorious from all time, that the wolf will fly from the hunter, that has anointed himself with lion’s tallow.” -*John de Lancaster*, a novel by Richard

Cumberland, Vol. I p.72 (1809).