

## The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **Of the Swabian who Scoffed the Liver**



When our Dear Lord and Saviour yet walked the earth from one town to another, preaching the Gospel and performing many miracles, a good, simple-minded Swabian came to him one day and asked: “My fellow traveller, where are you going?” “Our Lord replied to him: “I am travelling around and saving people.” Then the Swabian said, “Will you let me go with you?” “Yes,” Our Lord replied, “if you will be pious and pray with fervour.” The Swabian promised this. Now as they walked together, they passed in between two villages in which bells were being rung. The Swabian liked to chatter, so he asked Our Lord: “My fellow traveller, why are they ringing those bells?” Our Saviour, to Whom all things were known, replied: “In one village bells are ringing for a wedding, in the other bells are tolling for the funeral of a dead person.” “You go to the dead person!” said the Swabian. “And I’ll go to the wedding.”

After that our Lord entered the village and brought the dead person back to life, and He was given a hundred thalers. The Swabian bestirred himself at the wedding, helping to pour the wine for one guest after another, and also for himself; and when the wedding was over, he was given a kreutzer. The Swabian was well satisfied with that, so he hit the road and came back to Our Lord. The moment the Swabian saw Him in the distance, he held his little kreutzer up high and shouted: "Take a butcher's, my fellow traveller! I've got money; now what have you got?" and he boasted on and on about his little kreutzer. Our Lord laughed at him and said, "Oh, I think I have more than you!" and He opened His sack to show the Swabian the hundred thalers. The Swabian was not slow off the mark: swiftly throwing his miserable little kreutzer in among the hundred thalers, he cried: "We'll share, we'll share! We'll share everything with one another." Our Lord let it be.

Now as they walked on together, it so happened that they came upon a flock of sheep, and Our Lord said to the Swabian: "Go, Swabian, to the shepherd, bid him give us a lamb, and cook us the pluck or offal for a meal." "Alright!" said the Swabian, and he did as the Lord had bid him, went



to the shepherd, was given a lamb, skinned it, and prepared the pluck for eating. And while it was boiling, the liver kept floating to the top; the Swabian pushed it down with a spoon, but it would not stay at the bottom, and this vexed him beyond measure. So he took a knife, cut off the liver – for it was done – and ate it. And so, when the food was placed on the table, Our Lord asked

what had become of the liver. But the Swabian had an answer ready at hand: the lamb had not had one. "Well!" said our Lord, "and how could it have lived without a liver?" But the Swabian solemnly swore: "By God and all the Saints, it didn't have one!" What was our Lord to do? If he wanted the Swabian to keep silent, he had to leave it at that.

Now it came to pass that they were walking together again when, once more, the bells rang out in two villages. The Swabian asked: "My friend, why are the bells ringing?" "In one village they are tolling bells for a dead person, in the other they are ringing for a wedding," said Our Lord. "Fine!" said the Swabian. "Now you go to the wedding and I'll go to the dead person!" (thinking he too would earn a hundred thalers). He further asked the Lord: "My friend, what did you do to raise that man from the dead?" "Well," replied the Lord, "I said to him, rise in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost! Then he rose." "Very well, very well!" cried the Swabian, "Now I know how to do it properly!", and he went to the village where the dead man was being borne along towards him. When the Swabian saw this, he cried out in a loud voice: "Hold it! Hold it! I'll bring him back to life, and if I don't bring him back to life then hang me without judgement or sentence."

The good people were happy, promised the Swabian a hundred thalers, and set down the bier on which the dead man lay. The Swabian opened the coffin and began to speak: "Rise in the name of the Holy Trinity!" But the dead man would not rise. The Swabian became anxious, he spoke his blessing a second and a third time, but the dead man not arising, he cried out in fury: "Well then, lie there in the name of a thousand devils!"

When the people heard these profane words and saw that they had been deceived by the nincompoop, they left the coffin where it was, seized the Swabian, and soon hastened with him to the gallows, where they threw up the ladder and led the poor Swabian up it.

Our Lord made His way there nice and leisurely, for He well knew how the Swabian would fare, yet He was curious to see how he would conduct himself. Now He came to the place of judgement and cried, “Oh good companion, whatever have you done? What kind of figure is this I see you cutting?” The Swabian was incandescent and began to curse: the Lord had not taught him the blessing correctly. “I taught you correctly,” said the Lord, “but you did not learn and do it correctly; yet be that as it may. If you will tell me what became of the liver, I shall save you!” “Oh!” said the Swabian, “the lamb really did not have a liver! What are you accusing me of?” “Well, you just don’t want to say it!” said the Lord. “Come now, admit it, and I shall bring the dead man back to life!” But the Swabian began to yell: “Hang me, hang me! That way, I’ll escape this torment. He will press me about the liver, even though I’ve clearly told him that the lamb didn’t have one! Just hang me straight off!”

When our Lord heard this – that the Swabian would sooner let himself be hanged than confess the truth – He commanded that he be let down and now brought the dead man back to life Himself.

Now when they departed from that place together, our Lord said to the Swabian: “Come here, we shall share the money we have made and then part from one another, for if I had to save you from the gallows here, there, and everywhere, it would be too much for me.” So he took the two

hundred thalers and divided them into three shares.

When the Swabian saw this, he asked, “Hey, my friend, why are you making three shares when we’re only twain?” “You see,” our dear Lord replied, “this share here is mine, the second share is yours, and the third share is for the man who scoffed the liver!” When the Swabian heard this, he joyfully exclaimed: “Then by God and all the Saints, I did scoff it!” So he spoke, and he pocketed the third share as well; and so he took his leave of Our good Lord.