

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Dog's Distress**

There was once a dog who lay hungry and woebegone in a field, and above him a lark sang her delightful song in sweet strains. When the dog heard this, he said: "O you fortunate bird, how happy you are, how sweetly you sing, how high into the heavens you soar! But I – what cause have I to be glad? My master has turned me out and barred his door behind me, I am lame, I'm sick, I cannot hunt for any food, and I must die of starvation here!"

After the lark had heard the hungry dog lamenting in this wise, she flew up to him and said: "Oh, you poor dog! I am moved by your suffering; will you be grateful to me if I help you to fill your belly?" "What with, Lady Lark?" the dog asked in a feeble voice, and the lark replied: "Look, there is a child coming towards us, carrying food to that ploughman; I shall manage it so that she lays down the food and runs after me, and in the meantime you go over and eat the cheese and the bread, and still your hunger!"

The dog expressed his gratitude for this friendly offer, and then the lark flew towards the child and began to tease her. Now she flew before her, now she fluttered on this side, now on that one, until the child thought, "I must catch the lark"; and she thought she should, for the lark pretended to have lost the use of a wing, letting one of its small pinions hang down as if it were broken. The child kept snatching at her, but her attempts to grab with one hand were futile, so she laid down the cloth in which she carried the food and chased the lark, which hopped ever just ahead of her; meanwhile the dog raised itself, limped towards the cloth and snuffled inside, where



there was a piece of bread, a curd cheese, and four good eggs, and he ate them unboiled and unshelled, and the cheese uncarved, and he took the bread with him as he crept away and hid himself in the cornfield. When the lark saw that the dog had his share, she flew up into the air and sang merrily; the tricked child cursed her, and did so all the more when she found her cloth to be empty. In tears, she returned to her mother, and I do not know if she was given a hiding, but it is most likely that something of the kind ensued.

The lark flew over to the dog and asked him how he felt now. He said thank you very much, he had never been better. "Only one request, dearest Lady Lark, do I have weighing on my heart," he said, "he who is full would fain be happy. Please, tell me something that will give me a laugh and make me merry."

"Very well!" said the lark, "follow me." And the lark flew ahead, with the dog following her, to a barn, whose loft could easily be reached from the ground; the lark bid the dog climb up and look down, for the loft floor was dilapidated and ridden with cracks. Down below on the threshing-floor two baldies were threshing; the lark quickly alighted on one of the bald pates, and the second man quickly clapped his hand on the other's head, thinking to catch the lark; but the clever bird was too fast for him and flew off to the side. "Now, companion, what's all this? What did you hit me for?" the first baldy asked the other, who excused himself, saying that a bird had alighted on his head and he had wanted to catch it; if the smack had hurt, he was sorry. Meanwhile the lark alighted on the bald pate of the man who was explaining, and the other man struck him so hard a blow that his head, had

it been made of glass, would certainly have shattered; it did, at least, throb terribly, and then the insults began, and both threshers threw down their flails and got into each other's hair. Of course, not having any hair, neither of them could tear out clumps of the other's, and so, instead of pulling, they scratched one another on their bald pates, making the blood flow, and violently butted each other; so it was chrome dome against chrome dome and scratch against scratch, and they also tugged at each other's ears. This



made the dog laugh so uncontrollably that he became quite ill, and he could not stop himself from shaking; and then, from sheer laughter, he tumbled down from the heights of the loft plump onto the threshers' bald heads, making them stop short, for the dog was heavy and this manner of receiving hair upon one's head seemed somewhat odd to them. They at once united and turned their anger against the dog, and being threshers, they thrashed him until such time as he managed to scrape through a hole in the barn wall and then pass under the fence, seeing stars, his ears ringing, and laughing on the other side of his face. Thoroughly tenderised and dead beat, he laid himself down in the grass behind the fence, and the lark came flying up and asked, "Noble Sir, how do you find yourself?"

"Well, Lady Lark," the dog groaned, "I've had quite my fill. I'm a completely beaten dog! By my faith, I believe I have no back left, the threshers have tanned my hide and flayed me alive. Oh, if I am to live

longer, I must have a surgeon!" – "Certainly, rest assured! I'll fetch you one, if there's one anywhere to be found," the lark said and flew away. Soon she found a wolf, whom she addressed: "Mr. Wolf? I suppose that you have absolutely no appetite?" "Oh, Lady Lark," came the answer, "as to that, my wolfish hunger stands at your service."

"Well, if you would thank me for it," continued the lark, "I would show you where a plump dog is lying, one who is highly unlikely to escape you!"

"O my noble queen, you are too gracious!" the grinning wolf said flatteringly, and he licked his lips. The lark flew ahead and he followed her, and when she came to the dog she addressed him: "Well, companion? Are you asleep? Don't you want to see the physician? Stand up straight, here comes the doctor!"

"Where? Lady Lark, where?" the dog asked in an exhausted voice, but when he saw the wolf he yelled: "No, Lady Lark, no! Not that doctor! Keep him away! I'm well again!" And with *one* bound the dog was up on his legs and almost flying through the air, with no fence too high for him to clear and no ditch too broad.