

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Ears of Corn**



There was once a time – but it was inconceivably long ago – when all stalks of corn, and those of other cereals too, bore full golden-yellow ears that hung right down to the ground; at that time there was no poverty and no famine, not ever, and that was the Golden Age. At that time, all men could eat their fill with delight, and the birds who like to eat grains – hens and doves and other birds – found their fill of feed.

But there were among men some who were ungrateful and godforsaken, and who held the lovely, beneficial gift from God, the dear corn, in no regard whatsoever. There were women who, when their little children had soiled themselves, took the full bushels of ears to cleanse their children with, and threw the ears on the dung-heap; and the maids scoured with the full ears, and the boys and little girls chased each other through the dear corn, played hide-and-seek in it, rolled around on it, and trampled it underfoot. This made the dear Lord grieve, for He had given cereals as nourishment to men and as fodder to cattle, and not for wanton spoliation; and He thought to Himself, We shall do things differently, and the Golden Age shall come to an end.

And so the good Lord brought it to pass that every stalk would thenceforth bear only a single ear: first for mankind, that it learn to take better care of the dear cereals; and then for the innocent beasts, that they at least not be deprived of their fodder because men were not worthy of even the single ear.

From then on, hunger and famine and poverty came into the world. Every now and then, and but rarely, does the good Lord cause a wonder stalk with many, many ears to shoot up here or there, thereby showing men what cereals once were, and what He can do. And an old prophecy is passed around the people, that one day, after a great length of years, when the words of the Evangelist will have come true – Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will, benediction, and love among all men¹ – at that time, the earth will be quickened by God to yield once more such stalks as are full of ears down to their roots. But none of us will live to see that day.

¹ Luke 2:14.