

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Partridge**

Once a rich Jew was travelling through a kingdom and he carried a large treasure of money and goods. As his way was to take him through a large forest, he was afraid of losing his life there for the sake of his money; and so he went to the King of the land, proffered him a gift, and requested that the King give him a trustworthy man to bring him through the forest and then across the rest of his kingdom. So the King commanded his cupbearer to act as escort, and the latter did as he was ordered, and conducted the Jew.

Now when the two men were in the forest, the cupbearer, who coveted the Jew's treasure, came to a halt on the path and said to him: "You go first!" The Jew was startled; suspecting the cupbearer's evil



intention, he refused to go on ahead. The cupbearer straightaway drew his sword and cried: "Jew, you must die here by my hand!" "Oh, dear cupbearer, don't do it!" cried the Jew, "such

a murderous deed done to me would not remain hidden! Even when a murder is executed in secret, unseen by human eyes, it will be revealed by the birds which fly under Heaven!"

While the Jew was saying these words, a partridge flew up in the forest, over their heads and away. Then the cupbearer fleered and said scornfully: "Take heed, Jew – that partridge will, I am sure, inform the King that I murdered you here." And so the cupbearer murdered the Jew in the forest, took all the money and valuables on his person, buried him secretly, and returned to Court.

And a whole year had passed since the cupbearer's perfidious deed,

when it so happened that the King was made a present of partridges; the cupbearer gave them to the cook to have them well dressed, and brought them to the table. And as he put the partridges down on the table before the King, he thought of the Jew he had murdered, and of his last words about birds, and he could not help laughing. The King saw this and asked what he was laughing about? But the cupbearer gave the King an untrue reason for his laughter.

Some four weeks later, it came about that the King held a banquet for his officers and servants, and the cupbearer was there also; and the King himself was very cheerful and merry, and jocular and jovial, and he had so much wine and so many fine spirits served up that several of his servants became drunk. And when they were all in this merry mood, the King spoke to his cupbearer: "Dear cupbearer, now tell me honestly and truthfully, what the reason was for your laughing of late, when you served me partridges; for you did not give me a truthful account at the time!" The cupbearer was intoxicated, and when the wine is in, the wit is out, so he said: "Well, my Lord King, when the Jew cried out that the birds which fly under Heaven would reveal that he had been secretly murdered, at that very moment a partridge flew up into the air; I could not but remember that, and I had to laugh at it."

The King kept silent after these words, seemed not to mind them, and made as if his merriment were not disturbed. But the following day he consulted with his privy council, speaking to them thus: "What does the man deserve who was to conduct a traveller safely though the realm in the name of the King, but who personally murdered and robbed his charge?" The councillors answered with one voice: "He deserves the gallows!"

Thereupon the King presided over a public trial and appointed a prosecutor to accuse the cupbearer; and as the accused had, while inebriated, related his deed before witnesses, so he had to confess it before the court, and he was condemned to the gallows. And so, by means of partridges, the clandestine murder was made manifest and known.