

The Folk- and Fairy-Tales of Ludwig Bechstein: **The Raven's Guile and Ravens' Revenge**

Long did the old raven live at the Court of the Eagle-King; he became a member of the Privy Cabinet and heard all the resolutions the eagles passed against the ravens, and he overheard all the secrets of the first in the kingdom. As for the Eagle-King's First Counsellor, he retired from his position; he tendered his demission because, he said, "He who cannot be advised cannot be helped. He who chooses to be blind with seeing eyes, let him be so. I have spoken and given warning in all faithfulness and have saved my soul. O beguiled King, credulous King! How you will remember my warning when it is too late!" And he departed, and flew to distant mountains to end his days in peace in a quiet country seat, far from the strife of the King's Court.

The King of the Ravens quietly and patiently awaited his faithful follower, while his entourage believed him to be dead long since, for the King carefully guarded his secret from everyone, not giving the slightest inkling of it even to his closest confidants. Then one evening the raven came flying towards them, and they were all astonished and greatly amazed, and did not know if they should believe their eyes, when the King, who had heaped marks of disfavour on this raven in front of everyone, and indeed violently maltreated him, received him in such a friendly – even an affectionate – manner.

The wise old raven spoke to his King: "I bring good tidings and proclaim victory and glee! Heaven has placed our enemies in our hands. The eagles have now discovered a cleft in an unscalable crag, and they all sleep together inside, for it is wide and spacious, airy and dry, and protected from the rain and the burning sun; but the entrance is narrow and

without guards, because neither men nor beasts can come near. We, however, can approach them, and so up! my King, up! all you brave and trusty ravens! Let everyone grab a stick of dry wood, as large as he can carry with his beak and claws, and I shall take a firebrand and fly at the head.”

Swiftly was this advice followed on the King’s giving his consent; the entire flock of ravens flew after the leader, everyone one threw his wood into the exit of the eagles’ cavern, and the old raven laid his glowing wood in the pile. Then they vigorously beat their wings and soon the wood was brightly ablaze.

A deadly terror seized the eagles, along with their King, who had imagined themselves to be safe, when they awoke from their first sleep. They rushed all over pell-mell, bumped into each other, they screeched in despair; the boldest ones flew through the flames, only to drop down dead outside, while inside the smoke and the heat intensified, so that one after the other sank down dying with twitching beats of their wings, including the King with all his family, and he cried out the lament: “What a fool is the man who shields the stranger and scorns the true admonisher!”

In this way did the Kingdom of the Lords of the Skies and the enmity between it and the ravens come to a conclusion, and if that wise adviser had not withdrawn with his family to those mountains, then there would be no more eagles at all; their kind has become rare, while the ravens have multiplied, have spread everywhere, are great speakers to this day, and hate the eagles still.