

# The Countess of Bosenstein



The people of the Achern valley remember a most terrible tale, the horrible exploits of the Countess of Bosenstein.

One day, a beggar-woman with seven wretched children came to the mistress of Castle Bosenstein begging food for herself and her offspring. But the lady, who was notorious for her cruelty, repulsed her with scorn and accused the sevenfold mother of the most sinful deeds. Whereupon the beggar-woman uttered a curse against the countess, to the effect that the great lady, too, would one day be delivered of that same number of children at the same time.

And soon her prophecy came true. The proud and haughty mistress of the castle gave birth to seven sons in one day.

But this bountiful blessing of children nearly drove her to despair. She sent out a trusted maidservant with six of the babies and told her to drown them in a nearby pond. But just as this minion was on her way to carry out her mistress' dreadful wishes, she met the master of the castle as he was riding home. Noticing the large bundle the woman was carrying, the Count of Bosenstein enquired what she had in her bag.

"A litter of puppies which I am to drown," replied the wicked wench.

The knight, seized with pity for the poor animals, took the sack, opened it, and learned to his horror the terrible deed that the now contrite woman had been about to commit.

Taking the children away from her, he secretly brought them to poor but honest folk who became their foster parents; the knight, however, never mentioned a word of what he had done to his heartless wife.

Seven year had gone by, and the Count of Bosenstein gave a large banquet in his castle inviting all the great people in the land. All kinds of amusements were arranged to entertain the noble guests, and every one seemed to be enjoying the gracious hospitality of their host. But the count himself was depressed and sad. While the high guests were all sitting at his table, he suddenly rose and asked his companions what punishment they considered fit for a woman who had killed her own children.

His bold wife quickly answered: "Such an unnatural mother deserves to be walled in alive." And thus she had pronounced her own sentence.

The knight beckoned silently to a servant who had been waiting for his master's signal. The doors of the great hall were thrown wide open, and six beautiful boys entered and came forward to greet their father.

The count then showed the heartless mother her children whom she had believed dead, and the punishment which she herself had suggested was carried into execution.

To this day, the people of the Achern valley can point out the hole in a wall of Castle Bosenstein which is called "The Noble Lady's Niche".