

**THE WILD HUNTSMAN, A
LEGEND OF THE
HARTZ. TRANSLATED
FROM THE GERMAN**

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The Wild Huntsman, a Legend of the Hartz. Translated from the German by Julius Wolff & Ralph Davidson & Woldemar Friedrich

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JULIUS WOLFF & RALPH DAVIDSON & WOLDEMAR FRIEDRICH

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THE WOODEN HOST

*"The Woden Host!" he faintly mutters,
And leans on Wunsch, support to gain.*

(See page 81)

THE WILD HUNTSMAN

A LEGEND OF THE HARTZ

BY

JULIUS WOLFF

19

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

RALPH DAVIDSON

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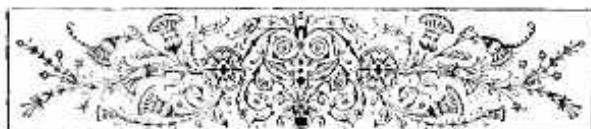
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THE Hartz Mountains are massed in wild and rugged beauty on the wide Prussian plain, where they are the first of the German highlands to meet the moist, cold winds from the North Sea. They were the final stronghold of belief in Woden and his sad train of twilight gods, and to-day for the whole German Fatherland they are the home of poetic myth and weird folk-tale. Julius Wolff, their great singer, and the youngest and last of the school of German romantic poets, was born in 1834 at Quedlinburg on the borders of the Hartz land. His novels, dramas, and lyrics have brought him fame, but he became the most popular of living German poets through the powerful and delicate epics that recount in a new form of rhymed narrative the shadowy legends of old Germany. In an ever-changing variety of story and spirit, constant only in a fervent and lofty patriotism, he wrote *Tannhäuser*, *The Ratcatcher of Hamelin*, *The Wild Huntsman*, *The Lorelei*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Till Eulenspiegel Redivivus*, and *The Pappenheimer*.

By Wolff's worship of beauty and his delight in love and the returning warmth and color of spring he seems one of the minnesingers reborn. He has never attempted the grand style, and his verse is pleasant and easy flowing. His tender pathos and riotous humor are his own; his own, too, is the new fashioning of the old tales. For him the time-worn legends are still the drama of life, and reveal the deeper mysteries of the human heart; and as the background for the comic and tragic play of forces, he shows nature in harmony with man in his feverish change of mood and emotion.

The Wild Huntsman, the work of thirty years ago, has far surpassed all Wolff's other poems in popularity. Its intensely dramatic story, its musical beauty, its exquisite appreciation of nature brought instant success. The first printing was exhausted in two weeks. The book has since passed through twenty-seven editions in Germany, and in America it has thrice been reprinted in the original tongue.

A fitful legend of the Wild Huntsman is common to all the adventure-loving peoples of the North. In France, sometimes as the holy St. Hubert, sometimes as the chase-mad *Grand Veneur*, he ranged the open glades of Fontainebleau. Wearing a crown of horns, Herne the

The Wild Huntsman v

Hunter was long a blasting tradition to the poor who lived on the skirts of Windsor Forest. In the Ross of outer Scotland and the Hebrides, the simple herdsmen were often terrified by his hoarse-winded horn, the din of the wild race of deer and dogs, and the ghostly hoofs quick-beating over the hollow, mist-wrapped hills. Everywhere in Germany the tale was told; from the bleak northern lowlands to the deepest recesses of the Black Forest in the South, where he was a wandering and undying Jew, who denied Christ a drink from a horse-trough, and bade him lap the water collected in a hoof-print.

Wolff took the legend much as he found it in the Hartz, inscribing the poem to the romantic home of his boyhood :

*Around thy mountains blows an ancient strain ;
High onward borne upon the storm-wind's pinion
It sings a Huntsman wild and his dominion,
And thunderlike is pealed its dread refrain.*

He made his Wild Huntsman a vivid reality in a historical setting of the waning Middle Ages. The ruthless Wildgrave of the legend he replaced with a Baron of heroic mould, cursed through headlong passions, but softened at times by human love and pity, and gentle moods of regret. His weird story and the