

**LEGENDS AND TALES OF
THE HARZ MOUNTAINS
NORTH GERMANY**

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Legends and tales of the Harz Mountains North Germany by Mrs. Maria Elise T.T. Lauder

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LEGENDS AND TALES

OF THE

HARZ MOUNTAINS,

NORTH GERMANY.



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Dedicated

{BY SPECIAL PERMISSION}

TO HER MAJESTY

MARGHERITA,

QUEEN OF ITALY.

PREFACE.

It was during my first summer visit to the Harz Mountains that the idea occurred to me of making a collection of the most interesting of the legends of this charming district. This appeared to me all the more desirable, since no such collection peculiar to this mountain range exists in English.

I wrote on the subject to the celebrated German author Gustav Freytag, unfolding my scheme, which he highly approved, and he very kindly rendered me valuable assistance by naming some of the books—and these were not a few—which it might be needful to study, and the libraries where they would be found.

From a vast mass—up into the thousands—of *Sagen*, or legends and traditions, I chose the most interesting, *giving them as I found them*, when they were only pure translations.

Some of the stories are, however, original, being founded on some legend.

No mountainous district of Germany is, perhaps, so rich in legendary lore as this most northern chain. Every ruin of castle or *Kloster*, every mountain stream, is haunted by the Fairies, Gnomes, Cobolds, and Dwarfs, who guard hidden treasures, and watch over the destinies of mankind, and in its mountain recesses, captive princesses and fair maidens are supposed

to sigh for freedom, or the dead Kaiser, the old Redbeard, awaits, surrounded with royal magnificence, the day of Germany's greatest power.

There are numerous wild tales told of the sandstone mountain, the Regenstein or Reinstein, from the times of the invading Huns, down to later days, and its summit commands a wide prospect over mountain and plain.

The immortal German poet Goethe, has rendered the witch-haunted Brocken forever famous through his master-poem "Faust." What visitor to its fog-crowned summit has not shaken hands with the *Spectre* of the Brocken? Down its massive slopes the limpid river Ilse tosses itself over huge, moss-grown granite boulders, forming hundreds of tiny water-falls. It was while rambling in this lovely vale the little poem "Alone," was written, which I have put into the mouth of my personal friend, the Countess von Omnesky, the mother of the little Tatjana.

The Harz is the birth-place of the "Wild Hunter," of the "Wild Army" of South Germany, of the Gold Crown, and of the noble Brünhilda. The view from the top of the granite mountain, the Hexentanzplatz, to the distant Brocken in clear weather, and across to that mass of granite, the Rosstrappe, the swift Bode leaping over huge blocks of fallen granite between, and a thousand feet below, is one of the finest in these mountains. This spot is the scene of the legend of Brünhilda.

On the summit of the Rosstrappe is a giant horse-hoof, hewn in the solid granite, measuring nearly three feet. How this mark came there is a mystery; but it is supposed that it

was hewn by the Druid priests. In the Scandinavian mythology Wodan's white steed was worshipped as well as the god himself.

When Charlemagne, in the eighth century, compelled the people of this district to embrace Christianity (by fire and sword) the wild mountaineers are supposed to have fled before his victorious forces, and to have entrenched themselves on the Ross-trappe, where traces of their rude fortifications may still be seen. They had no white steed to worship in this retreat, hence probably, the priests cut this rut of a horse-hoof, and invented the story of Brünhilda and the Giant's White Horse, in order to impress the people with the mighty power of the Thunder-god, and prevent them from entertaining any sympathy for the new religion.

From this point the echoes of the horn through the mountains are indescribably beautiful.

In the charming *Ilseenthal*, or valley of the Ilse, we found the home of the fascinating Princess Ilse, who is fabled to dwell in unearthly splendor in the mountain, the Ilsenstein, at the foot of which the transformed offenders of the Princess sigh and moan in the form of fir-trees. Should you, my dear reader, ever enjoy their refreshing shade, may Princess Ilse be as gracious to you as she was to me, and may your *Dream under Princess Ilse's Firs* prove still more pleasant than mine.

TOOFIE LAUDER.

