

**SILESIAIAN FOLK
TALES (THE BOOK
OF RÜBEZAH)**

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Silesian Folk Tales (the Book of Rübzahl) by James Lee & James T. Carey

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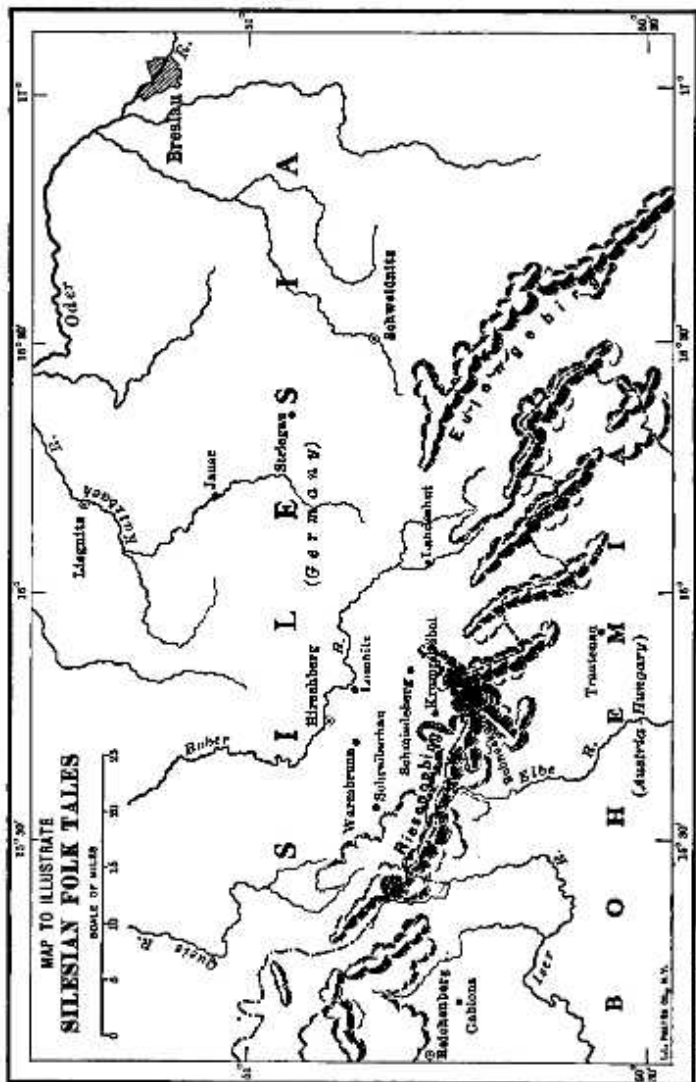
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JAMES LEE & JAMES T. CAREY

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OF RÜBEZAH)**



DEPT. OF

CAREY.

SILESIAN FOLK TALES

(THE BOOK OF RUBEZAH)

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SILESIA FOLK TALES.

W. P. 1

INTRODUCTION

THE following tales, for the most part, have their scenes laid in Silesia and Bohemia. They are well known throughout all Germany, especially in the central and southern parts. They are folk tales in the highest acceptation of the term. For centuries they have come down in the shape of tradition from generation to generation.

Silesia, the land of their birth, has had an eventful history. Originally a part of Poland, it was drawn under the influence of the German king, Frederick Barbarossa, about 1163. Many names of places suggest that the original population was Celtic. For four centuries it was almost continuously under the domination of Bohemia. It was annexed to that country about 1472. It was finally added to Prussia by Frederick the Great. Bohemia derives its name from a Celtic tribe. It forms the border line between the German and Slavonic races. The geography and history of these countries are very interesting and will repay any reading and study that may be given to them.

Rübezahl, the hero of these tales, to use the words of a now forgotten writer¹ of his adventures, "is a spirit prince and exercises supreme authority over all other gnomes in his district. He is superior to them in many particulars. What his *real* appearance is no one really knows. He can make himself so beautiful that Apollo is ugly in comparison. On the other hand, he may, and he often does, assume an appearance so terrible that old women hurriedly mutter a fervent prayer, brave men take to flight, and young maidens sink in unconsciousness. His character is as changeable as his form."

¹ Lyser.

His better side is presented in this little volume, but many stories are told of the manner in which he took revenge on mankind for the great injury it inflicted on him and which eventually gave him his popular name.

"Imagine yourselves, my dear readers, seated on a wild winter night in a Silesian hut in the Riesengebirge,¹ several thousand feet higher than the surrounding valleys, with snow, fathoms deep, everywhere. The wild storm rages through the desolate mountains. Within, however, everything is warm and comfortable, and as the matrons and maidens busily spin, in fancy, you can listen with pleasure to their tales of the mighty Mountain Lord."

These tales have been carefully adapted for the young readers of the elementary schools, and it is to be hoped that these will derive as much pleasure from their perusal as do their young friends in the different countries of Central Europe.

There, Rübzahl is known as the hero of many a merry prank, and though his character is not entirely free from the charge of spiteful actions, he is, on the whole, a personage with whom it is well that our young folk should become acquainted.

Much has been written about him, though not in English. In fact, with an exception or two, this is the first collection of Rübzahl stories to be placed before the American reading public.

The general tone is quietly ethical, and the youngest reader should easily perceive the valuable lessons to be derived from them.

¹ Giant mountains, lofty and rugged, about 23 miles long and 14 miles broad, between Bohemia and Prussian Silesia. They are, next to the Alps, the highest of Central Europe. Schneekoppe is the highest point, being 5264 feet high.

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