

Preface

Asbjørnsen & Moe

Norwegian

Advanced
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A folk-tale, in its primitive plainness of word and entire absence of complexity in thought, is peculiarly sensitive and susceptible to the touch of stranger hands; and he who has been able to acquaint himself with the Norske Folkeeventyr of Asbjørnsen and Moe (from which these stories are selected), has an advantage over the reader of an English rendering. Of this advantage Mr. Kay Nielsen has fully availed himself: and the exquisite bizarrerie of his drawings aptly expresses the innermost significance of the old-world, old-wives' fables. For to term these legends, Nursery Tales, would be to curtail them, by nine-tenths, of their interest. They are the romances of the childhood of Nations: they are the never-failing springs of sentiment, of sensation, of heroic example, from which primeval peoples drank their fill at will.

The quaintness, the tenderness, the grotesque yet realistic intermingling of actuality with supernaturalism, by which the original Norske Folkeeventyr are characterised, will make an appeal to all, as represented in the pictures of Kay Nielsen. And these imperishable traditions, whose bases are among the very roots of all antiquity, are here reincarnated in line and colour, to the delight of all who ever knew or now shall know them.

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