

LEGENDS OF NUMBER NIP

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649629435

Legends of Number Nip by Mark Lemon

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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MARK LEMON

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LONDON :
BRADBURY AND EVANS, PRINTERS, WHITEPRIARS.

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BY
MARK LEMON.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES KEENE.

London:
MACMILLAN AND CO.
1864.

250. m. 239.

INTRODUCTION.

“WE find in most countries,” says the Fairy Historian, Mr. Keightley, “a popular belief in different classes of beings, distinct from men and from the higher orders of divinities. These beings are usually believed to inhabit, in the caverns of the earth, or the depths of the waters, a region of their own. They generally excel mankind in power and in knowledge, and, like them, are subject to the inevitable laws of death, though after a more prolonged period of existence.” Many circumstances of late years have combined to destroy the popular belief in Fairies, Fays, Elves, Trolls, and Dwarfs, although few persons can honestly declare that they have ceased to have an interest in the stories wherein the Good People play the prin-

cipal parts. Practical as the age is said to be, and devoted more to the cultivation of material possessions than any which have preceded it, human nature is in reality unchanged, and the love of the imaginative displays itself in many ways, even when that elevating faculty is disowned by its possessor. Music is now heard in almost every home, the painter's art endeavours to embody the poet's thought, or the historian's chronicle; the beautiful in form is sought to be realized in every thing that we employ for use, comfort, or display, thus paying homage to the Imaginative whilst professing to consider the Material as omnipotent. No, we have not parted with the Fairies; nor are we willing to cast away the works of those who have recorded their exploits in the wonderful Fairy-land, or in the no less beautiful world around us; and they will live on to amaze and delight as they have done for hundreds of years.

All lovers of fairy-lore know how deeply they

are indebted to such laborious and learned searchers into the archives of Elf-Land as Thiele, Jacob Grimm, and his brother, Hans Andersen, Thomas Keightley, Crofton Croker, and others who have thought it worthy of their wisdom to read and write about the Good People and their marvellous doings.

Among the earlier collectors of Fairy stories, Johann Karl Musæus stands foremost, and his "Volksmärchen der Deutschen, or Popular Legends of Germany," have made his name a household word in his own country until this day. These stories are what they profess to be, narratives and legends collected from old women at the spinning-wheels, and even from children in the street. He has not, therefore, a claim to the invention of the stories, but the charm of the style in which he has given them to his countrymen is entirely his own, and will always ensure an immense popularity.