

**RUSSIAN FAIRY
TALES FROM THE
SKAZKI OF POLEVOI**

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Russian fairy tales from the Skazki of Polevoi by P. Polevoi & R. Nisbet Bain

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P. POLEVOI & R. NISBET BAIN

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RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES.



THE GOLDEN MOUNTAINS.

RUSSIAN FAIRY TALES

FROM THE *SKAZKI* OF POLEVOI

BY

R. NISBET BAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY C. M. GERE

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PREFACE.

THE existence of the Russian *Skazki* or *Märchen* was first made generally known to the British Public some twenty years ago by Mr. W. R. S. Ralston in his *Russian Folk Tales*. That excellent and most engrossing volume was, primarily, a treatise on Slavonic Folk-Lore, illustrated with admirable skill and judgment, by stories, mainly selected from the vast collection of Afanasiev, who did for the Russian what Asbjörnsen has done for the Norwegian Folk-Tale. A year after the appearance of Mr. Ralston's book, the eminent Russian historian and archæologist, Peter Nikolaevich Polevoi (well known, too, as an able and ardent Shaksperian scholar), selected from the inexhaustible stores of Afanasiev some three dozen of the *Skazki* most suitable for children, and worked them up into a fairy tale book which was published at St. Petersburg in 1874, under the title of *Narodnuiya Russkiya Skazki* (Popular Russian Märchen). To manipulate these quaintly vigorous old-world stories for nursery purposes was, as may well be imagined, no easy task, but, on the whole, M. Polevoi did his work excellently well, and while

softening the crudities and smoothing out the occasional roughness of these charming stories, neither injured their simple texture nor overlaid the original pattern.

It is from the first Russian edition of M. Polevoi's book that the following selection has been made. With the single exception of '*Morozko*,' a variant of which will be familiar to those who know Mr. Ralston's volume, none of these tales has seen the light in an English dress before; for though both Ralston and Polevoi drew, for the most part, from the same copious stock, their purposes were so different that their selections naturally proved to be different also.

As to the merits of these Skazki, they must be left to speak for themselves. It is a significant fact, however, that all those scholars who are equally familiar with the Russian Skazki and the German Märchen, unhesitatingly give the palm, both for fun and fancy, to the former.

R. N. B.

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