



Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria, West Africa

Elphinstone Dayrell

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“MANY years ago a book on the Folk-Tales of the Eskimo was published, and the editor of The Academy (Dr. Appleton) told one of his minions to send it to me for revision. By mischance it was sent to an eminent expert in Political Economy, who, never suspecting any error, took the book for the text of an interesting essay on the economics of the blameless Hyperboreans.

“Mr. Dayrell's "Folk Stories from Southern Nigeria" appeal to the anthropologist within me, no less than to the lover of what children and older people call "Fairy Tales." The stories are full of mentions of strange institutions, as well as of rare adventures. The most striking point in the tales is the combination of good humour and good feeling with horrible cruelties, and the reign of terror of the Egbos and lesser societies. European influences can scarcely do much harm, apart from whisky, in Nigeria. As to religion, we do not learn that the Creator receives any sacrifice: in savage and barbaric countries He usually gets none. Only Ju Jus, whether ghosts or fiends in general, are propitiated. The Other is ‘too high and too far.’” -Andrew Lang

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