

**NIELS KLIM'S JOURNEY UNDER THE
GROUND; BEING A NARRATIVE OF HIS
WONDERFUL DESCENT TO THE
SUBTERRANEAN LANDS; TOGETHER WITH AN
ACCOUNT OF THE SENSIBLE. INHABITING THE
PLANET NAZAR AND THE FIRMAMENT**

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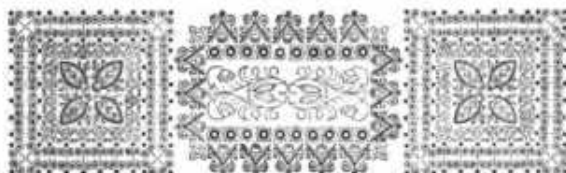
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LUDVIG HOLBERG & JOHN GIERLOW

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NIELS KLIM'S NARRATIVE.





INTRODUCTION.



LEWIS HOLBERG, the author of the *Narrative of Niels Klim*, was the most eminent writer among the Danes in the eighteenth century. His works show a surprising versatility of genius, comprising Histories and Treatises on Jurisprudence, together with Satires and Comedies. He was by birth a Norwegian, but was educated at the University at Copenhagen in Denmark. Soon after receiving a theological degree from that Institution, he visited Holland and England, and resided about two years at Oxford. Shortly after his return he published an "Introduction to European History," and an "Appendix to the

Universal History," in which he gives an account of contemporaneous affairs in the principal governments of the world. His historical labors were interrupted by a royal appointment to a professorship in the University. This office he enjoyed for five years, and then went abroad. In his Autobiography he has given an interesting account of his travels, both at this time and subsequently, and has described men and manners in a way highly entertaining, and generally just. He visited most of the cities of Southern Europe, abiding some time in each. He was well received by men of letters, and made many valuable acquaintance, wherever he went. After remaining one whole winter at Rome, and accomplishing the object of his mission, he returned to Copenhagen. His income was now small, and for two years he was oppressed with great pecuniary difficulties. It was during this period that he published in the Danish language, his "Introduction to the Law of Nature and of Nations." In this treatise, Holberg aimed rather to apply the principles of Natural Law to the Laws and Constitutions of Norway and Denmark, than elaborately to discuss the principles themselves.

The work was coldly received at its first appearance, but, after ten or twelve years began to excite public attention, and passed through several editions.

At length, the professorship of metaphysics becoming vacant, he received the appointment. The emoluments of this office, though small, supplied his necessities, and, not long after, on obtaining a more lucrative station in the University, he was relieved from his embarrassments.

Hitherto, he had devoted himself almost exclusively to Jurisprudence, History and Languages, and had never tried his hand at poetical composition. Indeed, he had ever felt a strange aversion to the study of poetry, and, although he had read the Latin Poets, and composed Latin Poems, it was more for the sake of proficiency in the language, than for pleasure, or, in his own words, "as a sick man swallows bitter draughts, not because they are grateful to the palate, but, because they are recommended by the physicians."

He now, however, seemed inspired by a new ambition, and set himself to imitate one of Juvenal's Satires. Encouraged by his unexpect-

ed facility, he projected and composed an original poem. Its success, when published, surpassed that of any work previously written in the Danish language. Judicious critics heartily commended it, and some even looked upon it as introducing a new era in the national literature. It was also published in Sweden and Germany, and raised the author's reputation abroad. He next published five more Satires, prefixing to each a short preface, unfolding the writer's design. His poetical productions were a source of more honor than gain, and, becoming weary of almost profitless pursuits, he abandoned poetry, and devoted himself to his former studies.

Nevertheless, the solicitations of friends prevailed upon him to turn his attention to Dramatic composition. Here he was equally successful. His comedies were received with great applause, and still hold possession of the stage. Like his Satires, they were intended to expose fashionable vice and folly. They are twenty-five in number. The names of several will give some notion of their general character — *The Babbling Barber* ; *Always Busy and Doing Noth-*

ing ; The Treacherous Step-father ; The Political Tinman.

His health being impaired by unintermitted literary labor, he determined to seek relief from the baths of Aix-la-Chapelle. He did not derive from them the benefit he anticipated, but, after spending the winter in Paris, returned home with renewed health and spirits. His next publication, was a Satirical Poem, entitled "Metamorphosis," in which brutes and trees are transformed into men. This was the last of his poetical efforts.

For several years he had been engaged in preparing "*A General Ecclesiastical History from the origin of Christianity to the Reformation of Luther,*" which he now published. This production, the author affirms, was written with perfect impartiality. He sometimes censured the Fathers, praised heretics, when they deserved it, and occasionally even commended the Popes. It was extremely popular, though all were not pleased with its liberal spirit. *A Comparative Biography of Asiatic and Indian Heroes*, after Plutarch's style ; *A short Historical Account of his Native Town ; The Narrative of*