

ETHEL ALEC-TWEEDIE

# THROUGH FINLAND IN CARTS

**Ethel Alec-Tweedie**  
**Through Finland in Carts**

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*Through Finland in Carts:*

*ISBN <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/27743>*

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# Ethel Brilliana Alec-Tweedie Through Finland in Carts

## PREFACE

When I was first approached by Messrs. Nelson and Sons for permission to publish *Through Finland in Carts* in their shilling series, I felt surprised. So many books and papers have jostled one another along my path since my first journey to Finland, I had almost forgotten the volume.

Turning to an old notebook, I see it was published in 1897 at sixteen shillings. It appeared in a second edition. The demand still continued, so a third edition, entirely revised and reprinted, was published at a cheaper rate. Others followed, and it now appears on the market at the reduced price of one shilling. Cheapness generally means deterioration of goods, but cheapness in books spells popularity.

Since the last revise appeared, a few years ago, I had not opened the pages of this volume; and strange though it may seem, I took it up to correct with almost as much novelty as if it had been a new book by some one else. An author lives with his work. He sees every page, every paragraph, by day and by night. He cannot get away from it, it haunts him; yet once the bark is launched on the waters of Fate, other things fill his

mind, and in a year or two he forgets which book contains some special reference, or describes some particular thought. This is not imagination but fact. The slate of memory would become too full and confused were such not the case.

Finland has been progressing, and yet in the main Finland remains the same. It is steeped in tradition and romance. There are more trains, more hotels, larger towns; but that bright little land is still bravely fighting her own battles, still forging ahead; small, contented, well educated, self-reliant, and full of hopes for the future.

Finland has Home Rule under Russia, and her Parliament was the first to admit women members.

For those interested in the political position of Finland, an appendix, which has been brought up to date in every way possible, will be found at the end of this volume.

*E. ALEC TWEEDIE.*

London, *Easter 1913.*

# CHAPTER I

## OUR FIRST PEEP AT FINLAND

It is worth the journey to Finland to enjoy a bath; then and not till then does one know what it is to be *really* clean.

Finland is famous for its baths and its beauties; its sky effects and its waterways; its quaint customs and its poetry; its people and their pluck. Finland will repay a visit.

Foreign travel fills the mind even if it empties the pocket. Amusement is absolutely essential for a healthy mind.

Finland, or, as the natives call it in Finnish, *Suomi*, is a country of lakes and islands. It is a vast continent about which strangers until lately hardly knew anything, beyond such rude facts as are learnt at school, viz., that "Finland is surrounded by the Gulfs of Finland and Bothnia on the South and West, and bordered by Russia and Lapland on the East and North," and yet Finland is larger than our own England, Scotland, Ireland, aye, and the Netherlands, all put together.

When we first thought of going to *Suomi*, we naturally tried to procure a Finnish guide-book and map; but no guide-book was to be obtained in all London, except one small pamphlet about a dozen pages long; while at our best-known map shop the only thing we could find was an enormous cardboard chart costing thirty shillings. No one ever dreamed of going to Finland.

Nevertheless, Finland is not the home of barbarians, as some folk then imagined; neither do Polar bears walk continually about the streets, nor reindeer pull sledges in summer – items that have several times been suggested to the writer.

Nothing daunted by want of information, however, we packed up our traps and started.

We were three women, my sister, Frau von Lilly – a born Finlander – and the writer of the following pages. That was the beginning of the party, but it increased in numbers as we went along – a young man here, a young girl there, an old man, or an old woman, joined us at different times, and, alas, left us again.

Having made charming friends in that far-away land, and picked their brains for information as diligently as the epicure does the back of a grouse for succulent morsels, we finally – my sister and I – jogged home again alone.

This looks bad in print! The reader will say, "Oh, how disagreeable they must have been, those two, that every one should have deserted them!" but this would be a mistake, for we flatter ourselves that we really are rather nice, and only "adverse circumstances" deprived us of our friends one by one.

Love and Friendship are the finest assets in the Bank of Life.

Grave trouble had fallen at my door. Life had been a happy bounteous chain; the links had snapped suddenly and unexpectedly, and solace and substance could only be found in work.

'Tis often harder to live than to die.

Immediate and constant work lay before me. The cuckoo's note trilled forth in England, that sad, sad note that seemed to haunt me and speed me on life's way. No sooner had I landed in *Suomi* than the cuckoos came to greet me. The same sad tone had followed me across the ocean to remind me hourly of all the trouble I had gone through. The cuckoo would not let me rest or forget; he sang a song of sympathy and encouragement.

It was on a brilliant sunny morning early in June that the trim little ship *Urania* steamed between the many islands round the coast to enter, after four and a half days' passage from Hull, the port of *Helsingfors*. How many thousands of posts, growing apparently out of the sea, are to be met with round the shores of Finland! Millions, we might say; for not only the coast line, which is some eight hundred miles in length, but all the lakes and fjords through which steamers pass are marked out most carefully by wooden stakes, or near the large towns by stony banks and painted signs upon the rocks of the islands. Sometimes the channels are so dangerous that the little steamers have to proceed at half-speed, carefully threading their way in and out of the posts, as a drag at Hurlingham winds its course between barrels at the four-in-hand competitions.

Many places, we learnt, are highly dangerous to attempt at night, on account of these stakes, which are put down by Government boats in the spring after the ice has gone, and are taken up in November before it forms again, because for about seven months all sea traffic is impossible. Sometimes the



channels are so narrow and shallow that the screw of the steamer has to be stopped while the vessel glides through between the rocks, the very revolutions of the screw drawing more water than can be allowed in that particular *skär* of tiny islands and rocks. At other times we have seen the steamer kept off some rocky promontory where it was necessary for her to turn sharply, by the sailors jumping on to the bank and easing her along by the aid of stout poles; or again, in the canals we have known her towed round particular points by the aid of ropes. In fact, the navigation of Finland is one continual source of surprise and amazement.

Finland is still rising out of the sea. Rocks that were marked with paint one hundred and fifty years ago at the water's edge, now show that the sea has gone down four or five feet. This is particularly noticeable in the north: where large ships once sailed, a rowing boat hardly finds waterway. Seaports have had to be moved. Slowly and gradually Finland is emerging from the waters, just as slowly and gradually the people are making their voice heard among other nations.

Few people in Great Britain realize the beauties of Finland. It is flat, but it is fascinating. It is a land of waterways, interspersed with forests. The winter is very cold, the summer very hot; the winter very dark, the summer eternal light. *Helsingfors* is one of the most picturesque harbours in the world. It is not like anywhere else, although it resembles Stockholm somewhat. It is so sunny and bright in the summer, so delicious in colourings and reflections, that the primary thought of the intricate watery

entrance to the chief capital is one of delight.

The first impressions on entering the Finnish harbour of *Helsingfors* were very pleasing; there was a certain indefinable charm about the scene as we passed in and out among the thickly-wooded islands, or dived between those strong but almost hidden fortifications of which the Russians are so proud. Once having passed these impregnable mysteries, we found ourselves in more open water, and before us lay the town with its fine Russian church of red brick with rounded dome, the Finnish church of white stone, and several other handsome buildings denoting a place of importance and considerable beauty. We were hardly alongside the quay before a dozen Finnish officials swarmed on board to examine the luggage, but no one seemed to have to pay anything; a small ticket stuck on the baggage saving all further trouble.

Swedish, Finnish, and Russian, the three languages of the country, were being spoken on every side, and actually the names of the streets, with all necessary information, are displayed in these three different forms of speech, though Russian is not acknowledged as a language of Finland, the two native and official languages being Swedish and Finnish. Only those who have travelled in Russia proper can have any idea of the joy this means to a stranger; it is bad enough to be in any land where one cannot speak the language, but it is a hundred times worse to be in a country where one cannot read a word, and yet once over the border of Russia the visitor is helpless. Vs becomes

Bs, and such general hieroglyphics prevail that although one sees charming tram-cars everywhere, one cannot form the remotest idea where they are going, so as to verify them on the map – indeed, cannot even tell from the written lettering whether the buildings are churches or museums, or only music halls.

Finnish is generally written with German lettering, Swedish with Latin, and the Russian in its own queer upside down fashion, so that even in a primitive place like Finland every one can understand one or other of the placards, notices, and signs.

Not being in any particular hurry, we lingered on the steamer's bridge as the clock was striking the hour of noon – Finnish time, by the way, being a hundred minutes in advance of English time – and surveyed the strange scene. Somehow *Helsingfors* did not look like a Northern capital, and it seemed hard to believe, in that brilliant sunshine, that for two or three months during every year the harbour is solidly ice-bound.

Yet the little carriages, a sort of droschky, savouring of Petersburg, and the coachmen (*Isvoschtschik*) certainly did not come from any Southern or Western clime. These small vehicles, which barely hold a couple of occupants and have no back rest, are rather like large perambulators, in front of which sits the driver, whose headgear was then of beaver, like a squashed top hat, very broad at the top, narrowing sharply to a wide curly brim, which curious head-covering, well forced down over his ears, is generally ornamented with a black velvet band, and a buckle, sometimes of silver, stuck right in the front.

Perhaps, however, the most wonderful part of the *Suomi Jehu's* attire was his petticoat. He had a double-breasted blue-cloth coat fastening down the side, which at the waist was pleated on to the upper part in great fat folds more than an inch wide, so that from behind he almost looked like a Scheveningen fishwife; while, if he was not fat enough for fashionable requirements, he wore an additional pillow before and behind, and tied a light girdle round his waist to keep his dress in place.

All this strange beauty could be admired at a very cheap rate, for passengers are able to drive to any part of the town for fifty *penniä*, equal to fivepence in English money. These coachmen, about eighty inches in girth, fascinated us; they were so fat and so round, so packed in padding that on hot days they went to sleep sitting bolt upright on their box, their inside pillows and outside pleats forming their only and sufficient support. It was a funny sight to see half a dozen *Isvoschtschiks* in a row, the men sound asleep, their arms folded, and their heads resting on their manly chests, in this case cuirassed with a feathery pillow.

Drawing these Finnish carriages, are those strange wooden hoops over the horses' withers so familiar on the Russian droschky, but perhaps most extraordinary of all are the strong shafts fixed inside the wheels, while the traces from the collar are secured to the axle itself outside the wheel. That seemed a novelty to our mind any way, and reminded us of the old riddle, "What is the difference between an inside Irish car and an outside Irish car?" "The former has the wheels outside, the latter has the

wheels inside."

At the present day much of this picturesqueness has passed away, and coachmen and chauffeurs in Western livery and the motor taxi-cab have largely replaced them.

Queer carts on two wheels were drawn up along the quay to bear the passengers' luggage to its destination, but stop – do not imagine every one rushes and tears about in Finland, and that a few minutes sufficed to clear the decks and quay. Far from it; we were among a Northern people proverbially as dilatory and slow as any Southern nation, for in the extreme North as in the extreme South time is *not* money – nay, more than that, time waits on *every* man.

Therefore from the bridge of our steamer we heard much talking in strange tongues, we saw much movement of queerly-dressed folk, but we did not see much expedition, and before we left Finland we found that the boasted hour and forty minutes advance on the clock really meant much the same thing as our own time, for about this period was always wasted in preparations, so that in the end England and Finland were about quits with the great enemy. Three delightful Finnish proverbs tell us, "Time is always before one," "God did not create hurry," "There is nothing in this world so abundant as time," and, as a nation, Finns gratefully accept the fact.

Every one seemed to be met by friends, showing how rarely strangers visited the land. Indeed the arrival of the Hull boat, once a week, was one of the great events of *Helsingfors* life, and

every one who could went down to see her come in.

A delightful lady – a Finlander – who had travelled with us, and had told us about her home in Boston, where she holds classes for Swedish gymnastics, was all excitement when her friends came on board. She travels to *Suomi* every year, spending nearly three weeks *en route*, to enjoy a couple of months' holiday in the summer at her father's parsonage, near *Hangö*. That remarkably fine specimen of his race, Herr S – , was met by wife, and brother, and a host of students – for he returned from Malmö, victorious, with the Finnish flag. He, with twenty-three friends, had just been to Sweden for a gymnastic competition, in which Finland had won great honours, and no wonder, if the rest of the twenty-three were as well-made and well-built as this hardy descendant of a Viking race.

Then again a Finnish gentleman had to be transhipped with his family, his horses, his groom, and his dogs, to wait for the next vessel to convey them nearer to his country seat, with its excellent fishing close to Imatra. He was said to be one of the wealthiest men in Finland, although he really lived in England, and merely returned to his native country in the summer months to catch salmon, trout, or grayling.

Then – oh yes, we must not forget them – there were the emigrants, nearly sixty in number, returning from America for a holiday, though a few declared they had made enough money and would not require to go back again. There are whole districts of Finlanders in the United States, and excellent settlers they

make, these hardy children of the North. They had been ill on the voyage, had looked shabby and depressed, but, as they came within sight of their native land, they appeared on deck beaming with smiles, and dressed out wondrous fine, in anticipation of their home-coming.

But were they excited? Not a bit of it. Nothing excites a Finn. Although he is very patriotic he cannot lightly rise to laughter or descend to tears; his unruffled temperament is, perhaps, one of the chief characteristics of his strange nature.

Yes, every one seemed met by friends on that hot June day; and we were lucky too, for our kindly cicerone, Frau von Lilly, who had tempted us to Finland, and had acquaintances in every port, was welcomed by her brother and other relations, all of whom were so good to us that we left their land many weeks afterwards with the most grateful recollections of overwhelming hospitality.

Our welcome to Finland was most cordial, and the kindly greetings made us feel at once at home among a strange people, none of whose three languages we could talk; but, as one of them spoke French, another English, and a third German, we found no difficulty in getting along. Such servants as knew Swedish easily understood the Norwegian words we had learnt sufficiently well to enable us to get about during two enjoyable and memorable visits to Norway,<sup>1</sup> although strange explanations and translations were vouchsafed us sometimes; as, for instance, when eating

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<sup>1</sup> *A Winter Jaunt to Norway.*

some very *stodgy* bread, a lady remarked, "It is not good, it is unripe dough" (pronounced like cough).

We looked amazed, but discovered that she meant that the loaf was not sufficiently baked.

As we drove along in the little *droschky* we passed the market, a delightfully gay scene, where all the butchers wore bright pink blouses or coats, and the women white handkerchiefs over their heads. We bumped over cobble stones and across tram lines, little heeded by the numbers of bicyclists, both men and women, riding about in every direction, for Finland was in the forefront in the vogue for bicycle-riding. It was most amusing to notice the cycles stacked in the railway vans of that northern clime, while on the steamers it is nothing extraordinary to see a dozen or more cycles amongst the passengers' luggage. In the matter of steamers, the companies are very generous to the cyclist, for he is not required to take a ticket for his machine, which passes as ordinary baggage.

Although we supply the Finlanders with machines, we might take a lesson from them in the matter of registration. At the back of every saddle in large figures was engraved the number, bought at the time of registration for four marks (three shillings and fourpence), consequently, in case of accident or theft, the bicycle could immediately be identified; a protection alike for the bicyclist and the person to whom through reckless riding an accident is caused.

*Helsingfors*, although the capital, is not a large town, having



only 150,000 inhabitants, but there are nearly five thousand registered bicycles plying in its streets. The percentage of riders is enormous, and yet cycling is only possible for about five months every year, the country being covered with snow and ice the rest of the time. Here we pass a Russian officer, who is busy pedalling along, dressed in his full uniform, with his sword hanging at his side. One might imagine a sword would be in the way on a cycle; but not at all, the Finland or Russian officer is an adept in the art, and jumps off and on as though a sword were no more hindrance than the spurs which he always wears in his boots. There is a girl student – for the University is open to men and women alike, who have equal advantages in everything, and among the large number who avail themselves of the State's generosity are many cycling dames.

The Finlander is brave. He rides over roads that would strike terror into our souls, for even in towns the cobble stones are so awful that no one, who has not trudged over Finnish streets on a hot summer's day, can have any idea of the roughness. A Finlander does not mind the cobbles, for as he says, "they are cheap, and wear better than anything else, and, after all, we never actually live in the towns during summer, so the roads do not affect us; and for the other months of the year they are covered with snow, so that they are buried sometimes a foot or two deep, and then sledges glide happily over them."

It is over such stones that the cyclist rides, and the stranger pauses aghast to see him being nearly bumped off his machine

– as we have ourselves bumped towards the bottom of a steep hill when coasting – and not apparently minding it in the least, judging by the benign smile playing upon his usually solemn physiognomy. He steers deftly in and out of the larger boulders, and soon shows us that he is a thorough master of his iron steed.

All the students of both sexes wear the most charming cap. In shape it closely resembles a yachting cap; the top is made of white velvet, the snout of black leather, and the black velvet band that encircles the head is ornamented in front by a small gold badge emblematic of the University. No one dare don this cap, or at least the badge, until he has passed his matriculation examination.

White velvet sounds thriftless; but in Finland, in the summer, it is very hot and dry; in fact, the three or four months of summer are really summer in all its glory. It is all daylight and there is no night, so that June, July, and August seem one perpetual midsummer day. For travelling or country rides, the Finland student wears a small linen cover over his white velvet cap, which is made to fix on so neatly that the stranger does not at first detect it is a cover at all. In the winter, the white cap is laid aside, and a black velvet one takes its place.

Among the lower orders the women work like slaves, because they must. Women naturally do the washing in every land, and in the Finnish waterways there are regular platforms built out into the sea, at such a height that the laundresses can lean over the side and rinse their clothes, while the actual washing is performed at

wooden tables, where they scrub linen with brushes made for the purpose.

Yet it seemed to us strange indeed to see women cleaning the streets; huge broom in hand they marched about and swept the paths, while a whole gang of female labourers were weeding the roadways.

Women in *Suomi* do many unusual things; but none excited our surprise so much as to see half a dozen of them building a house. They were standing on scaffolding plastering the wall, while others were completing the carpentry work of a door; subsequently we learnt there were no fewer than six hundred women builders and carpenters in Finland.

The Finns, though intellectually most interesting, are not as a rule attractive in person. Generally small of stature, thickset, with high cheek-bones, and eyes inherited from their Tartar-Mongolian ancestors, they cannot be considered good-looking; while the peculiar manner in which the blonde male peasants cut their hair is not becoming to their sunburnt skins, which are generally a brilliant red, especially about the neck where it appears below the light, fluffy, downy locks. Fat men are not uncommon; and their fatness is too frequently of a kind to make one shudder, for it resembles dropsy, and is, as a rule, the outcome of liqueur drinking, a very pernicious habit, in which many Finlanders indulge to excess. There are men in *Suomi*—dozens of them—so fat that no healthy Englishman could ever attain to such dimensions; one of them will completely

occupy the seat of an *Isvoschtschik*, while the amount of adipose tissue round his wrists and cheeks seems absolutely incredible when seen for the first time, and one wonders how any chair or carriage can ever bear such a weight. Inordinately fat men are certainly one of the least pleasing peculiarities of these northern nationalities.

Top hats seemed specially favoured by Finnish gentlemen.

Flannel shirts and top hats are, to an English mind, incongruities; but in *Suomi* fashion smiles approvingly on such an extraordinary combination. At the various towns, therefore, mashers strolled about attired in very bright-coloured flannel shirts, turned down flannel collars, trimmed with little bows of silken cord with tassels to fasten them at the neck, and *orthodox tall hats*.

The Finnish peasant women are as partial to pink cotton blouses as the Russian peasant men are to red flannel shirts, and the bright colours of the bodices, and the pretty white or black handkerchiefs over their heads, with gaily coloured scarves twisted round their throats, add to the charm of the *Helsingfors* market-place, where they sit in rows under queer old cotton umbrellas, the most fashionable shade for which appears to be bright blue.

The market is a feature in Finland, and in a measure takes the place of shops in other countries. For instance, waggons containing butcher's meat stand in rows, beside numerous carts full of fish, while fruit and flowers, cakes and bread-stuffs in

trucks abound. Indeed, so fully are these markets supplied, it seems almost unnecessary to have any shops at all.

The old market folk all drink coffee, or let us be frank at once and say chicory, for a really good cup of coffee is rare in Finland, whereas chicory is grown largely and drunk everywhere, the Finlanders believing that the peculiar bitter taste they know and love so well is coffee. Pure coffee, brewed from the berry, is a luxury yet to be discovered by them.

As we drove along, we noticed at many of the street corners large and sonorous bells made of brass, and furnished with chains to pull them. We wondered what this might mean, and speculated whether the watchman went round and rang forth the hours, Doomsday fashion.

On asking information we were told —

"They are fire-bells, very loud, which can be heard at some distance."

"But does not a strong wind cause them to ring?"

"No; they must be pulled and pulled hard; but you had better not try, or you may be fined heavily."

So we refrained, and pondered over the fire-bells.

It is as necessary to have a passport in Finland as in Russia. But whereas in Russia a passport is demanded at once, almost before one has crossed the threshold of an hotel, one can stay in a Finnish town for three days without having to prove one's identity; any longer stay in a hotel or private house often necessitates the passport being sent to the police. It is a most

extraordinary thing that a Finn should require a passport to take him in or out of Russia; such, however, is the case, and if a man in *Wiborg* wishes to go to St. Petersburg to shop, see a theatre, or to spend a day with a friend, he must procure a passport for the length of time of his intended visit. This is only a trifle, nevertheless it is a little bit of red-tapism to which the Finlander might object. But it may have its advantages, for the passport rigorously keeps anarchists, socialists, Jews, and beggars out of *Suomi*.

Until 1905, the press was severely restricted by the Censor, though not to the same extent as in Russia itself, where hardly a day passes without some paragraph being obliterated from every newspaper. Indeed, in St. Petersburg an English friend told us that during the six years he had lived there he had a daily paper sent to him from London, and that probably on an average of three days a week, during all that time, it would reach him with all political information about Russia stamped out, or a whole page torn away.

We ourselves saw eight inches blackened over in *The Times*, and about the same length in that day's *Kölnische Zeitung* and *Independence Belge* totally obliterated in Petersburg. We received English papers pretty regularly during our jaunt through Finland, and what amazed us most was the fact that, although this black mark absolutely obliterated the contents, no one on receiving the paper could have told that the cover had been tampered with in the least, as it always arrived in its own wrapper,

addressed in the handwriting we knew so well. It remained an endless source of amazement to us how the authorities managed to pull the paper out and put it in again without perceptibly ruffling the cover.

It is not unknown for a Finnish paper, when ready for delivery, to have some objection made to its contents, in which case it must not be distributed; consequently, a notice is issued stating that such and such a paper has been delayed in publication, and the edition will be ready at a later hour in the afternoon. The plain meaning of which is that the whole newspaper has been confiscated, and the entire edition reprinted, the objectionable piece being taken out. *Presshinder* is by no means uncommon.

Unfortunately "a house divided against itself falleth," which is a serious hindrance to progress. That *Suomi* is divided, every one who has studied Finnish politics must know. With its Russian rule, its Finnish and Swedish proclivities, and its three languages, the country has indeed much to fight against.

For those who are interested in the subject of its Home Rule, an Appendix will be found at the end of this volume.

Very important changes have of late taken place in Finland. Less than half a century ago the whole country – at least the whole educated country – was still Swedish at heart and Swedish in language. From Sweden Finland had borrowed its literature and its laws until Russia stepped in, when the Finn began to assert himself. The ploughman is now educated and raising his voice with no uncertain sound on behalf of his own country and his

language, and to-day the greatest party in the Parliament are the Social-Democrats.

The national air of Finland is *Maamme* or *Vårt Land* in Swedish ("Our Land").

The words were written by the famous poet, J. L. Runeburg, in Swedish, which was at that time the language of the upper classes, and translated into Finnish, the music being composed by Frederick Pacius. In Finnish the words are —

## MAAMME

Oi maamme, Suomi, synnyinmaa, soi sana kultainen!  
Ei laaksoa, ei kukkulaa, ei vettä rantaa rakkaampaa,  
Kuin kotimaa tää pohjainen, maa kallis isien.

On Maamme köyhä, siksi jää jos kultaa kaipaa ken.  
Sen kyllä vieras hylkää, mut meille kallein maa on tää  
Kans' salojen ja saarien se meist' on kultainen.

Ovatpa meistä rakkahat kohinat koskien,  
Ikuisten honkain huminat, täht' yömmе, kesät kirkkahat  
Kaikk', kaikki laulain loistaen mi lumes' sydämen.

Täss' auroin, miekoin, miettehin isämme sotivat,  
Kun päivä piili pilvihin tai loisti onnen paistehin,  
Täss' Suomen kansan suurimmat he vaivat kokivat.



Ken taistelut ne kaikki voi kertoilla kansan tään,  
Kun sota laaksoissamme soi ja halla nälän tuskat toi?  
Sen vert' ei mittaa yksikään ei kärsimystäkään.

Täss' on se veri vuotanut edestä meidänkin,  
Täss' ilonsa on nauttinut ja tässä huoltain huokaillut  
Se kansa, jolle muinoisin kuormamme pantihin.

Täss' olla meidän mieluist' on ja kaikki suotuisaa;  
Vaikk' onni mikä tulkohon, meill' isänmaa on verraton.  
Mit' oisi maassa armaampaa, mit' oisi kalliimpaa?

Ja tässä' täss' on tämä maa, sen näkee silmämme;  
Me kättä voimme ojentaa, ja vettä, rantaa osoittaa,  
Ja sanoa: kas tuoss on se, maa armas isäimme!

Jos loistoon meitä saatettais vaikk' kultapilvihin,  
Miss' itkien ei huoattais' vaan tähtein riemun sielu sais,  
Ois tähän kurjaan kotihin halumme kwitenkin.

Totunuden, runon kotimaa, maa tuhatjärvinen,  
Elomme sulta suojan saa, sä toivojen ja muistoin maa,  
Ain' ollos onnen vaihdellen, sä vapaa, riemuinen.

Sun kukoistukses' kuorestaan kerrankin puhkeaa;  
Viel' lempemme saa nousemaan sun toivos, riemus  
loistossaan,  
Ja kerran laulus' synnyinmaa, korkeemman kaiun saa.

When the *Maamme* is sung every one rises, the men take off their hats, and nearly all those present join in the song, their demeanour being most respectful, for a Finn is nothing if not patriotic.

Another very popular air is the following, written by Zachris Topelius, whose fairy tales are now being translated into English

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## SINUN MAASI

(Finnish)

Laps' Suomen, älä vaihda pois  
Sun maatas ihanaa!  
Sill' leipä vieraan karvast 'ois  
Ja sana karkeaa.  
Sen taivas, päiv' on loistoton,  
Sen sydän sulle outo on.  
Laps' Suomen, älä vaihda pois  
Sun maatas ihanaa!

Laps' Suomen, kaunis sull' on maa  
Ja suuri, loistokas.  
Veet välkky, maat sen vihoittaa,

Sen rant 'on maineikas.  
Yö kirkas, päivä lämpöinen  
Ja taivas tuhattähtinen,  
Laps' Suomen, kaunis sull 'on maa  
Ja suuri, loistokas.

Laps' Suomen, armas maasi tää  
Siis muista ainiaan!  
Sull 'onnea ja elämää  
Ej muuall' ollenkaan.  
Jos minne tiesi olkohon,  
Niin juures' synnyinmaassas' on  
Laps' Suomen, armas maasi tää  
Siis muista ainiaan!

## **DITT LAND**

**(Swedish)**

O barn af Finland, byt ej bort  
Din ädla fosterjord!  
En främlings bröd är hårdt och torrt,  
Och klanglöst är hans ord.  
Hans sol är blek, hans himmel grå,  
Hans hjerta kan ej ditt förstå.

O barn af Finland, byt ej bort  
Din ädla fosterjord.

O Finland's barn, ditt land är godt,  
Ditt land är stort och skönt.  
Dess jord är grön, dess haf är blått,  
Dess strand af ära krönt.  
Dess natt är ljus, dess sol är klar,  
Dess himmel tusen stjernor bar.  
O Finland's barn, ditt land är godt,  
Ditt land är stort och skönt.

Och därför, barn af Finland, minns  
Ditt ädla fosterland!  
Ej ro, ej lif, ej lycka finns  
I fjerran från dess strand.  
Hvarhelst din väg i verlden går,  
Din rot är der din vagga står.  
Och därför, barn af Finland, minns  
Ditt ädla fosterland!

# THY LAND<sup>2</sup>

(English)

O child of Finland, wherefore fly  
Thy noble Fatherland?  
The stranger's bread is hard and dry,  
And harsh his speech and hand;  
His skies are lead, his heart is dead  
Thy heart to understand.  
O child of Finland, wherefore fly  
Thy noble Fatherland?

O Finland's heir, thy land is fair  
And bright from bound to bound;  
Her seas serene; no gayer green  
On tree or lea is found.  
Her sun's a blaze of golden rays,  
Her night an eve star-crowned.  
O Finland's heir, no land more rare  
Or nobly fair is found.

Then, child of Finland, ne'er forget

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<sup>2</sup> Translated from the Swedish by Alfred Perceval Graves.

Thy noble Fatherland;  
For peace of mind is not to find  
Upon a stranger's strand.  
To that bright earth that gave thee birth  
Thou owest heart and hand.  
Then fealty swear to Finland fair,  
Our famous Fatherland.

We dined at several restaurants in *Helsingfors*; for, in the summer, the Finlanders live entirely out of doors, and they certainly make the most of the fine weather when they have it. Perhaps our brightest dining-place was on the island of *Högholmen*, to which little steamers ply continually; but as we arrived at the landing-stage when a vessel had just left, we engaged a boat to row us across. It was a typical Finnish boat, pointed at both ends, wide in the middle, and a loving couple sitting side by side rowed us over. They were not young, and they were not beautiful; in fact, they looked so old, so sunburnt, and so wrinkled, that we wondered how many years over a hundred they had completed. But, judging by the way they put their backs into the work, they could not have been as ancient as they appeared.

One of the first words one hears in Finland is *straxt*, which means "immediately," and we soon found it was in universal use. No order is complete without the word *straxt* as an addition, and, naturally, the stranger thinks what a remarkably punctual and generally up-to-time sort of people the Finns must be. But the voyager seems born to be disappointed. No Finn ever hurried

himself for anybody or anything; the word *straxt* means, at least, a quarter of an hour, and the visitor may consider himself lucky if that quarter of an hour does not drag itself out to thirty minutes.

A man asks for his bill. *Straxt* is the reply. He suggests his luggage being fetched downstairs, reminds the landlord that the *kärra* (little carts) were ordered for noon, now long past.

"*Straxt, straxt*," is smilingly answered, but the landlord does not move – not he; what is to be gained by being in a hurry? why fidget? an hour hence is quite as good as the present quickly fleeting by. So soothing his conscience by the word *straxt*, he leisurely goes on with his work, and as "like master, like man," those below him do not hurry either, for which reason most things in Finland are dominated more by chance than ruled by time.

It is annoying, it is often exasperating, but there is a superb calm, or shall we say obstinacy, about the Finnish character that absolutely refuses to be hustled, or hurried, or jostled.

They are a grave, solid people, who understand a joke even less than the Scotch, while such a thing as chaff is absolutely unintelligible to them. Life to the Finns seems a serious matter which can be only undertaken after long thought and much deliberation. They lose much pleasure by their seriousness. They sing continually, but all their music is sad; they dance sometimes, but the native dances are seldom boisterous as in other lands. They read much and think deeply, for unlike the Russians, only 25 per cent. of whom can read, in Finland both rich and poor are wonderfully well educated; but they smile seldom, and look

upon jokes and fun as contemptible. Education is one constant enquiry, and knowledge is but an assimilation of replies.

The men and women enjoy great freedom. Educated in the same schools, they are brought up to ignore sex; the young folk can go out for a whole day together, walking or snow-shoeing, skating or sledging, and a chaperon is unheard of; yet in all social gatherings, as an antithesis to this, we find an unexpected restraint. At a party the men all congregate in one room, or at one end of the table, leaving the women desolate, while the young of both sexes look askance at one another, and, in the presence of their elders, never exchange a word, in spite of their boasted freedom. Society is paradoxical.

More than that, by way of discouraging healthy chatter and fun among the young people, the elder folk always monopolise conversation, two persons invariably discussing some particular point, while twenty sit silently round listening – result, that young men and women know little of one another if they only meet in society, and the *bon camaraderie* supposed to result from the system of mixed education is conspicuous by its absence. Everything is against it. The very chairs are placed round a room in such a way that people must perforce sit in a circle – that dreaded circle which strikes terror into the heart of a British hostess. Even on the balconies an enormous table, with chairs packed closely round it, is constantly in evidence, so that the circle is even to be found there, with the consequence that every one sits and stares at every one else, except the people who may



or may not keep up a conversation. The strange part of the whole arrangement is that Finlanders do not understand how prim they really are socially, and talk of their freedom, and their enormous emancipation, as they sit at table, where the greater number of those present never dare venture to say anything, while the young men and women rarely even sit together. They apparently make up for lost time when away from their elders.

The people are most hospitable, to strangers particularly so, and certainly the flowers and the books and sweets we were given, to say nothing of invitations received to stay in houses after an hour's acquaintance, to dine or sup, to come here or go there, were quite delightful. They are generous to a remarkable degree, and hospitable beyond praise. This is a Northern characteristic like honesty; both of which traits are sadly lacking in the Southern peoples. Kindness and thoughtfulness touch a warm chord in the heart of a stranger, and make him feel that Finland is a delightful country, and her people the staunchest of friends. But, after this divergence, let us return to our first drive.

Those slouching men in long jack boots, butchers' blouses of white and shapeless form, are Russian soldiers. Soldiers, indeed! where is the smartness, the upright bearing, the stately tread and general air of cleanliness one expects in a soldier? These men look as if they had just tumbled out of their beds and were still wearing night-shirts; even the officers appeared strange to our English ideas, although medals adorned their breasts and swords hung at their sides even when bicycling.

"Do you mix much with the Russians?" we asked one of our new friends.

"Hardly at all; they have conquered us, they rule us, they plant whole regiments among us, and they don't even take the trouble to understand us, or to learn our language. No, we keep to ourselves, and they keep to themselves; our temperaments are so different we could never mix."

And this is true. The position of Alsace-Lorraine towards Germany is much the same as that of Finland towards Russia. Both have been conquered by a country speaking another language to their own, and of totally foreign temperament to themselves. After forty years the people of Alsace-Lorraine are as staunchly French as before, and the same applies to the position of the Finlanders.

Life in *Helsingfors* is very pleasant for strangers in the summer; but for the natives it has no attraction. Accustomed to a long and ice-bound winter, the moment May comes every family, possessed of any means, flits to the country for three or four months. All the schools close for twelve weeks, and the children, who have worked hard during the long dark winter, thoroughly enjoy their holiday. Summer comes suddenly and goes swiftly. The days then are long, as the nights are short, for in the north of Finland there is a midnight sun, and even in *Helsingfors*, during June, he does not set till about eleven, consequently it remains light all night – that strange weird sort of light that we English folk only know as appertaining to very early morning. As we

sat finishing supper about ten o'clock at the Kapellet, we were strongly reminded of the light at three A.M. one morning, only a week or two before, when we had bumped to Covent Garden to see the early market, one of London's least known but most interesting sights, in our friendly green-grocer's van, with Mr. and Mrs. Green-grocer for sole companions.

The Kapellet is a delightful restaurant in the chief street of *Helsingfors*, standing among trees, under which many seats and tables are placed, and where an excellent military band plays during meal times. Strange meal times they are too, for, after early coffee and roll, every one breakfasts between ten and twelve on meats with beer or wine, not an egg and fish breakfast such as we have, but a regular solid meal. Finlanders in towns dine from two to four, and sit down to supper between eight and ten, so that they have three solid meat meals a day – probably a necessity in such a climate – and drink wines and spirits at each of these functions, which so closely resemble one another that the stranger would have difficulty in knowing which was supper and which was breakfast.

In the summer mostly men frequent the Kapellet, for their wives and families are away at their villas on the islands. Apparently any one can build a villa on any island, and the moment he does so, like Robinson Crusoe, he is master of the situation. One does not require to pay more than a trifle for the site, and a beautiful wooden house can be erected in about two months for two or three hundred pounds. Parents who are well

off generally have a nice island and a comfortable house, and when their sons and daughters marry, they build thereon small villas for them; thus whole families, scattered during the greater part of the year, come together every summer.

For this reason family life in Finland is delightful. There are many thousand islands – millions, one might almost say – and therefore plenty of room for all. Finland is like a sponge; the lakes and islands being represented by the holes.

We lived in a flat at *Helsingfors*. Frau von Lilly's brothers had a delightful *étage*, with a dear old housekeeper, and thither we went. Mina looked after our wants splendidly, and smiled upon us all day as strange sort of beings because we liked so much *hett vatten* (hot water). She was always opening our door and walking in, for no one ever dreams of knocking in Finland; standing before us, her hands folded on her portly form, she smiled and smiled again. *Mycket bra* (very nice), we repeated incessantly to her joy – but still she stayed, whether anxious to attend to our wants or to have a look at Englishwomen and their occupations we know not; one thing, however, is certain, that without a word in common we became fast friends. Her beautifully polished floors made us afraid to walk across them, and the large rooms, broad beds, and lots of towels came as a real treat after nearly five days at sea. Every one lives in flats in the towns, there are only a few private houses, and therefore long stone flights of stairs lead to the "appartement" as they do in Germany, while the rooms, with their enormous stoves and endless doors, remind

one continually of *das Vaterland*.

From our flat, which stood high, we had a most glorious view. Immediately in front was the students' club, while beyond were the Parliament Houses, charming churches, the fine park given to the town by Henrik Borgström, the lovely harbour, the fortifications, and the deep, dark sea.

As the sun set we revelled in the glories visible from our balcony, and thoroughly enjoyed the charms of the Northern night. Midnight suns must be seen to be understood, the gorgeous lights are enthralling. Our souls were steeped in that great silence.

It is during such nights as these that vegetation springs into existence. A day is like a fortnight under that endless sky of light. Hence the almost tropical vegetation that so amazed us at times in this ice-bound land. For though the Gulf of Bothnia is frozen for many months, and the folk walk backwards and forwards to Sweden, the summer bursts forth in such luxuriance that the flowers verily seem to have been only hiding under the snow, ready to raise their heads. The land is quickly covered by bloom as if kissed by fairy lips. And the corn is ripe and ready for cutting before the first star is seen to twinkle in the heavens.

Just outside our window, which looked away over the Russian and Lutheran churches to the sea, we watched a house which was being built with some interest. The town stands either on massive glacial rocks, or, in other parts that have been reclaimed from the sea, on soft sand; in the latter case the erection has to be reared on piles. For the foundation of the house mentioned, long

stakes, about twenty feet in length, were driven into the ground. Above this pile a sort of crane was erected, from which hung a large heavy stone caught by iron prongs. Some twenty men stood round the crane, and with one "Heave oh!" pulled the stone up to the top, where, being let loose, it fell with a tremendous thud upon the head of the luckless pile, which was driven with every successive blow deeper into the earth. When all the piles were thus driven home, four or five feet apart, rough bits of rock or stone were fitted in between them, and the whole was boarded over with wood after the fashion of a flooring, on top of which the house itself was built. The men worked all day and all night in relays at the job.

*Helsingfors* is very advanced in its ideas; it then had electric light everywhere, telephones in each house, and so on; nevertheless, it only possessed one large carriage, and that was a landau which belonged to the hotel. In this splendid vehicle, with two horses and a coachman bedecked like an English beadle, we went for a drive, and so remarkable was the appearance of our equipage that every one turned round to look at us, and, as we afterwards learned, to wonder who we could possibly be, since we looked English, spoke German, and drove out with Finlanders.

Many happy days might be passed in *Helsingfors*, which contains museums and various places of interest. But it is essentially a winter town, and, as all the smart folk had flown and the windows were as closely barred as those of London in August

and September, we hurried on to gayer and quainter scenes, which unfolded many strange experiences, or this summer trip to Finland would never have been written.

During the ten weeks we were in *Suomi* we slept in twenty-six different beds. Beds did we say? Save the mark! We slept under twenty-six different *circumstances*, would be more to the point, for our nights of rest, or unrest, were passed in a variety of ways – in beautiful brass bedsteads with spring mattresses; in wooden boxes dragged out until they became a bed, the mattress being stuffed with the *luikku* or *ruopo* plant, which makes a hard and knotty couch. We slept in the bunks of ships, which for curiosity's sake we measured, and found seldom exceeded eighteen inches in width; we lay on the floor with only a rug dividing us from the wooden boards; or we reposed on a canvas deck-chair, which originally cost about five shillings in London; we even dozed on the top of a dining-room table; and last, but not least, to avoid giving ourselves up as a meal to unwelcome visitors, we avoided beds altogether, and slept on the top of a grand piano, or, more properly speaking, an old-fashioned spinet, the notes of which gave forth a hard and tinny sound when touched.

It must not be imagined from this that there were not beds, for beds were generally procurable, lots of beds, in fact, the mattresses piled one on the top of another. But – well, we preferred the spinet!

## CHAPTER II

# A FINNISH COUNTRY-HOUSE

A seventeen hours' trip in the *Kaiser Wilhelm* along the coast brought us from *Helsingfors* to *Wiborg*. The passage lay between innumerable islands, and every landing-place was thickly strewn with wood ready for export.

Finland is a primitive country, and we could not help smiling at the spectacle of a family removal. When changing residences it is evidently not considered necessary to pack up anything, consequently the entire contents of a house were put on board and removed from the ship without any wrappings whatsoever. The mattresses and the blankets were not even tied together. Pictures were all left loose, looking-glasses stood uncovered, yet, thanks to the gentleness and honesty of the Finnish sailors, nothing appeared to get broken, and when we left the quay we saw the owner of these chattels standing complacently in the midst of his household gods, from which, judging by the serenity of his smile, nothing had been stolen or lost.

As we neared *Wiborg* we were all excitement as to what a visit to a country-house would be like, especially as we were going among strangers, having been most hospitably invited to stay with the relations of our Finnish friend on their summer island-home of *Ilkeäsaari*.



As the *Kaiser Wilhelm* hove-to alongside the quay, we were warmly welcomed by the English and American Consuls and Baron Theodore von B – . There were many passengers, but not much luggage, and consequently, by the time we had exchanged a few words of greeting, we discovered that every one of our boxes and bags had been placed singly in state on the seat of separate *droschkies*. The row of five Russian-dressed cabbies were much disappointed when they found that the many fares they had anticipated were not in store for them, and that all the luggage was to go upon one cart sent for the purpose, while the solitary landau and pair in waiting was our host's private carriage, intended to bear us some three hours' drive to his quaintly situated residence.

Passing the old castle of *Wiborg* with its modern red roof and many centuries of Swedish history, then the palace of the Governor, to say nothing of numbers of villa residences further on, where the folk of St. Petersburg – only two hours distant by train – settle down for the summer to enjoy sea-bathing, we plunged into a charming pine-wood, through which the roadway was so narrow that the trees literally swished the carriage as it passed. Drawing up suddenly we discovered that a stretch of water divided us from our island home, and as we were in a carriage, and there was no bridge, it seemed for a moment as if further progress were impossible.

Nothing of the kind, however, the carriage was calmly driven on to a kind of wide barge made for the purpose, the horses' noses

being reflected in the water into which they peered. So clear were the reflections that evening, that the butterflies fluttering overhead were so distinctly visible in the water that it seemed almost impossible to believe them other than denizens of the lake along with the fishes.

The picturesque-looking man, wearing a pink cotton shirt and slouch hat, who had been waiting for our arrival, came on to the floating bridge beside us, and by means of pulleys and ropes, to work which he turned a handle, ferried us across to the opposite bank. This was a private arrangement and very ingenious, and away we trotted merrily through the pines, the earth, moss-grown and fern-strewn, intersected here and there by massive boulders of rock.

So rocky indeed was the road in parts that the carriage was driven over huge blocks of granite, while distinct marks of past glacial movement were everywhere visible.

Ah! there was the house, much larger than a villa, entirely made of wood, except for the stone foundations containing the cellars. The solid trees of which it was built were painted white, so that it looked very sunny and cheerful. A flight of wooden steps led to the front door, and to the numerous balconies by which, Finnish fashion, the house was nearly surrounded.

The warmest welcome awaited us; we were received as though we had been old and dear friends, instead of total strangers from a foreign land. Our host, the Captain and his Fru, were, luckily for us, excellent German scholars; indeed all the family spoke

that language fluently, while some of the members could also speak English.

Our hostess's first exclamation when we arrived at her beautiful country home was an inquiry as to the contents of the large hold-all.

"Rugs," we replied, "and fur coats."

"Rugs and fur coats," she exclaimed in amusement. "What for?"

"To wear, of course," we answered.

"Did you think Finland was cold, then?" she asked.

"Certainly," we returned, "so we have each brought a rug and a fur-lined coat."

She laughed and said, "Far better to have brought cotton frocks."

It was our turn now to be amazed, and we asked her what she meant by cotton frocks.

"Why, do you not know that our summer is much hotter than it is in England – it is shorter, but much warmer."

We were surprised. But she was right, as subsequent events proved, and our bundle of rugs was an everlasting joke during the whole of our journey through *Suomi*, for having brought them we would not part with them, although during the whole of June, July, and August, we never undid them once nor opened an umbrella, except one night while descending the famous *Uleå* rapids, when, if we had owned all the furs in Britain, we could not have kept ourselves warm, so impregnated with cold damp

was the atmosphere.

The island *Ilkeäsaari* is the scene of a huge family gathering each summer, after a truly Finnish fashion, for besides the big house, which is a sort of rendez-vous for every one, the married sons and daughters have also their own summer residences within a stone's throw; the parents' house is a general dining-hall on Sundays and sometimes on other days also.

Could any more delightful household be imagined? Clever and interesting in every way, with advanced ideas and wide interests, their home almost cosmopolitan in its English, French, and German literature, the elder folk ready and willing to chat on any theme in several tongues, the children talking Finnish to the servants, French to their governess, or Swedish to their parents, it was altogether an ideal family life in every sense, and more than charming to the strangers to whom *Ilkeäsaari* opened its doors and gave such a kindly welcome.

It is only in the homes of the people, rich and poor, one can learn anything of their characteristics. One may live in the large hotels of London, Paris, St. Petersburg, or Rome, and yet know almost nothing of the nations in whose midst we find ourselves. Food is much the same all over Europe, waiters wear regulation black coats and white ties, drawing-rooms and reading-rooms contain *The Times*, the *Kölnische Zeitung*, or the *Novóe Vremya*; and when, guide-book in hand, we walk through the streets to visit the museums, we imagine we are learning the innermost lives of the people, of whom we generally know mighty little.

One week in the smallest private house teaches us more than a month in the largest hotel in the world. "All very well," says the reader; "but how are we to get into the private houses?"

Ah, there is the rub. We must open our own doors first; we must learn some languages, that golden key to travel, and when foreigners come into our midst with introductions, we must show them our homes and our lives if we want them to do the same for us. As it is, that humiliating cry is always sounding in our ears —

"English people never speak anything but English, and they are inhospitable to strangers; they are a proud nation and cold."

It is a libel, a hideous libel; but one which is, unfortunately, believed all over the Continent by foreigners not thoroughly acquainted with English folk in their own homes.

English, being the language of commerce, is fast becoming the language of the world, in spite of its imperfections; but to enjoy a country one must be able to converse in its own tongue.

The Finnish summer is not long, but it is both light and warm, the average temperature being as much higher than our own as it is lower in winter, and the people certainly enjoy both seasons to the full. Every country-house is surrounded by balconies, and on them all meals are served in the summer. We were fortunate enough to dine in many family circles, and to see much of the life of the rich, as well as the life of the poor.

One of the greatest features of a high-class Finnish meal is the *Smörgåsbord*. On a side-table in every dining-room rows of little appetising dishes are arranged, and in the middle stands a

large silver urn, *brännvin*, containing at least a couple of liqueurs or schnapps, each of which comes out of a different tap. Every man takes a small glass of brandy, which is made in Finland from corn, and is very strong. No brandy is allowed to be imported from Russia or *vice versâ*, a rule very strictly adhered to in both countries. Having had their drink and probably *Skålat* ("I drink your health") to their respective friends, each takes a small plate, knife, and fork from the pile placed close at hand, and helps himself to such odds and ends as he fancies before returning to the dining-table to enjoy them. Generally four or five things are heaped on each plate, but as they are only small delicacies they do not materially interfere with the appetite. Usually in summer the *Smörgåsbord* contains —

*Salt, graf lax*, raw or smoked salmon.

*Rädiser*, radishes.

*Ost*, cheese of various kinds, shaved very thin and eaten with black bread and butter, *Bondost* and *Baueruk* being two favourite kinds among the peasantry.

*Kaviar*, which is quite excellent and unlike anything we have in England, being the whole eggs of the sturgeon instead of a messy black compound.

*Renstek*, smoked reindeer, which is not nearly so nice as it is when eaten fresh in the winter in Norway.

*Ägg*, cold hard-boiled eggs cut in slices and arranged with sardines or anchovies.

*Ost omelette*, a delicious sort of custard or omelette, made with

cheese and served hot, although everything else on the side-table is cold.

Mushrooms cooked in cream is another favourite dish.

Then small glass plates with slices of cold eel in jelly, salmon in jelly, tongue, ham, potted meat, etc., complete the *Smörgåsbord*, which is often composed of fifteen or twenty dishes.

These delicacies are many of them delicious, but as the same things appear at each meal three times a day, one gets heartily sick of them in the end, and, to an English mind, they certainly seem out of place at breakfast time.

There are many excellent breads in Finland —

*Frankt bröd* is really French bread; but anything white is called *Frankt bröd*, and very good it is, as a rule.

*Råg bröd*, or rye bread, is the ordinary black bread of the country, made in large flat loaves.

*Hålkaka*, the peasants' only food in some parts, is baked two or three times a year, so they put the bread away in a loft or upon the kitchen rafters; consequently, by the time the next baking day comes round it is as hard as a brick. A knife often cannot cut it. It is invariably sour, some of the last mixing being always left in the tub or bucket, that the necessary acidity may be ensured.

*Knäckebröd* is a thin kind of cake, made of rye and corn together, something like Scotch oatcake, with a hole in the middle, so that it may be strung up in rows like onions on a stick in the kitchen. When thin and fresh it is excellent, but when thick

and stale a dog biscuit would be equally palatable.

*Wiborgs kringla*, called in Finnish *Wiipurin rinkeli*, is a great speciality, its real home and origin being *Wiborg* itself. It is a sort of cake, but its peculiarity is that it is baked on straw, some of the straw always adhering to the bottom. It is made in the form of a true lover's knot, of the less fantastic kind, and a golden sign of this shape hangs outside to determine a baker's shop; even in Petersburg and in the north of Finland a modified representation of the *Wiborgs kringla* also denotes a bakery.

Having partaken of the odds and ends mentioned, the ordinary mid-day meal or dinner begins, usually between two and four o'clock.

The hostess, who sits at the head of the table, with her husband generally on one side and her most honoured guest on the other, with two huge soup-tureens before her, asks those present whether they will have soup or *filbunke*, a very favourite summer dish. This is made from fresh milk which has stood in a tureen till it turns sour and forms a sort of curds, when it is eaten with sugar and powdered ginger. It appears at every meal in the summer, and is excellent on a hot day. It must be made of fresh milk left twenty-four hours in a warm kitchen for the cream to rise, and twenty-four hours in the cellar, free from draught, to cool afterwards. The castor sugar is invariably served in a tall silver basin – that is to say, the bowl, with its two elegant handles, stands on a well-modelled pillar about eight or ten inches high, altogether a very superior and majestic form of sugar basin.



There are two special drinks in Finland – one for the rich, the other for the poor.

*Mjöd* is one of the most delicious beverages imaginable. It is not champagne, and not cider, but a sort of effervescing drink of pale yellow colour made at the breweries, and extremely refreshing on a hot day. It costs about one shilling and sixpence a bottle, sometimes more, and is often handed round during an afternoon call with the coffee and *marmelader*, the famous Russian sweetmeats made of candied fruits.

The other drink is called in Swedish *Svagdricka*, but as it is really a peasant drink, and as the peasants speak Finnish, it is generally known as *Kalja*, pronounced "Kal-e-yah." It looks black, and is really small beer. Very small indeed it is, too, with a nasty burnt taste, and the natives up-country all make it for themselves, each farm having half a dozen or twenty hop poles of its own, which flavours the *Kalja* for the whole party for a year, so its strength of hop or amount of bubble is not very great.

From the middle of June till the middle of July we ate wild strawberries three times a day with sugar and cream! They simply abound, and very delicious these little *Mansikka* are. So plentiful are they that *Suomi* is actually known as "strawberry land."

There are numbers of wild berries in Finland; indeed, they are quite a speciality, and greet the traveller daily in soup – sweet soups being very general – or they are made into delicious syrups, are served as compôte with meat, or transformed into puddings.

Here are a few of them —

Finnish.	Latin.	
<i>Mansikka</i>	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild strawberries, found in profusion everywhere.
<i>Mesikka</i>	<i>Rubus arcticus</i>	Red, with splendid aroma. Liqueur is made from them.
<i>Vaatikukka</i>	<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Wild raspberry.
<i>Lakka</i>	<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	Black. Often made into a kind of black juice, and taken as sweet soup.
<i>Mustikka</i>	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	(Whortleberries) — Black. Often made into soup of a glorious colour.
<i>Puolukka</i>	<i>Vaccinium vitis idaea</i>	(Red whortleberry) — Like a small cranberry. Eaten with meat.
<i>Juolukka</i>	<i>Vaccinium uliginosum</i>	A common black kind of berry, not very eatable.
<i>Herukka</i>	<i>Ribes nigrum</i>	Cranberry.
<i>Karpalo</i>	<i>Vaccinium oecococcus</i>	This berry is not gathered in the autumn, but is left under the snow all the winter, ready to be picked in spring when the snow melts, as the fruit is better when it has been frozen. It keeps in a tub for months without any preparation, and is particularly good as a jelly when eaten with cream.
<i>Muurain</i>	(Swedish, <i>Hjortron</i> )	In appearance is like a yellow raspberry, grows in the extreme north in the morasses during August. It is a most delicious fruit, with a pine-tree flavour.

"Will you have some sweetbread?" we were once asked, but as we were drinking coffee at the moment we rather wondered why we should be going back to the *éentrees*— our stupidity, of course. Sweetbread is the name given to all simple forms of cake in Finland; a great deal of it is eaten, and it is particularly good.

At dinner, hock, claret, or light beer are drunk as a rule; but at breakfast and supper, beer and milk are the usual beverages, the latter appearing in enormous jugs — indeed, we have actually seen a glass one that stood over two feet high.

After dinner, coffee is immediately served with cream, not hot milk; after supper, tea is generally handed round, the hostess brewing it at the table.

Beside her stands a huge *samovar*, which is really a Russian urn, and not a teapot as generally supposed. Inside it are hot coals or coke, round the tin of which is the boiling water, while above it

stands the teapot, kept hot by the water below. It is generally very good tea, for it comes from China in blocks through Siberia, but it is much better when drunk with thin slices of lemon than with milk. As a rule, it is served to men in tumblers, and to women in cups, an etiquette with an unknown origin. It is pale-straw colour, and looks horribly weak, and so it is, but with lemon it forms a very refreshing beverage.

At the end of each meal every one at the table goes and shakes hands with the host and hostess and says "*tack*" (thank you); certainly a pretty little courtesy on the part of strangers, but rather monotonous from children, when there are many of them, as there often are in Finland, especially when the little ones cluster round the parents or grandparents as a sort of joke, and prolong the "*tack*" for an indefinite period.

Then the men smoke; seldom the women, for, although so close to Russia, Finnish women rarely imitate their neighbours in this habit. The elder men smoke tremendously, especially cigarettes, fifty or sixty per diem being nothing uncommon. In fact, this smoking has become so terrible a curse that there is now a movement among the students, most of whom seem to be anti-smokers, against tobacco, so perhaps the new generation may not have such black teeth and yellow fingers.

But to return to the first impressions of our country-house. The balconies are made very wide so as to admit a dining-table, and as the roofs of the houses project a couple of feet beyond the balcony, in order to throw the winter's snows on to

the ground instead of allowing them to block up the verandahs, there is plenty of shade; that is occasionally increased by hanging curtains of red and white striped canvas, which can be drawn together, and form quite a little room. They were the jolliest, happiest meals in that island home! Every one spoke German – the language we all knew best in common – and conversation, jokes, and merriment never flagged as we sat facing that glorious view of pine-wood and water, while the lilac (just two months later than in England) scented the air, or the hawthorn afforded shelter for endless birds who were constantly singing. Among the most notable cries was that of the friendly cuckoo. Fourteen, and even twenty, of us often dined together – the daughters, sons, husbands, wives, and children from the other houses frequently gathering round the father's board. And in the cool of the evening we usually went for a row on the lake.

Every one boats in Finland. Two or three sailing boats, and some dozen rowing skiffs and canvas *kanots* of different sizes, lay upon the Captain's water, and at all times and seasons some person was away in one of them, or down at the bathing house enjoying a so-called sea-bath, although it was not really salt water, being more of an inland lake. Canoeing is one of the great sports of Finland, and yet it is only within the last ten years that these *kanots* have come in such universal use, although no country was ever better fitted for the purpose, for it is one series of long lakes joined together by beautiful rivers. Dr. August Ramsay must be termed the Father of Finnish canoeing, for it

was his book on the subject that made the sport so fashionable. Funnily enough, these Finnish canoes are always made of canvas stretched over ribs of wood. They are two and a half to three feet wide and some twenty feet long; therefore they are pretty solid and can be used with a sail. An Englishman fond of the sport cannot do better than take a summer jaunt to Finland, and with his canoe travel through some of the most beautiful parts of that captivating country.

Finlanders lead a very jolly, independent, happy life during the summer months. They seem to throw off their cares and responsibilities and to make up their minds to enjoy the long, balmy days, and, as they are not devoured by the midges which eat up strangers alive, they have nought to ruffle the even tenor of their way.

After supper, when the day's work is over, and the great heat has gone, boating parties are made up, and, in the brilliant midnight sunsets, they glide in and out of the islands, visit distant friends, singing the while some of the delightful melodies for which their land is justly famous.

Even as far back as 1896, when I paid my first visit to Finland, and when telephones were barely in general use in England, *Suomi* was ahead of us.

The great excitement in the homes was the ring of the telephone bell and the Swedish cry, "Hulloa! ring up so and so," which at first we imagined was being translated into English for our benefit. Telephones are very cheap there, costing about a

couple of pounds a year, and they are universal; for, like Norway, Finland was one of the first countries to be riddled with them, and a delightful luxury they are, for by their means one can live out of the world, and yet be in it.

In those early days of telephones strange things happened. *Pekka* was madly in love with *Ilma*, a wondrously beautiful maid. He heard rumours that she was trifling with another. He could not stand the torture even for a few hours, and so "rang up" the mansion of the family *Heikkilä*.

Joy, he heard the voice of *Ilma* in answer, and said, "Is it you, dear one? I, *Pekka*, am here."

A soft sigh replied.

"Are you glad to hear *Pekka*— do you care for him just a little?"

"Yes," sighed the fair maid.

"Darling, it is not true you care for *Armas Merikanto*?"

"No, no!" she cried.

"You like me – you love me?"

"Yes," she softly murmured.

"Will you be my wife?"

"I will, *Pekka*."

Overjoyed, *Pekka* almost hugged the wooden box that brought him such glad tidings.

"When may I come to see you, darling – my little wife?"

"Come, *Pekka*— come for dinner at three o'clock."

A few more sweet nothings, and, quite enraptured, he returned to his dull office routine. At three o'clock, spick and span, with

a golden ring in his pocket, he presented himself at the house of the *Heikkiläs*.

In the salon stood the mother. He went towards her to receive her motherly congratulations. She rushed forward to meet him, as all good mothers-in-law should, and, throwing herself into his arms, she cried —

"Take me, *Pekka*, dearest *Pekka*; I am yours till death."

"Mine?"

"Yes. I have loved you long, darling *Pekka*, and I am ready whenever you can fix a day for our marriage!"

Tableau!

*Moral*— beware of telephones!

Matrimony generally expects too much and gets too little. Courtship proved the same in this case.

The first thing that strikes a stranger on entering a Finnish country-house is the mats, placed at the foot of every staircase and outside every door. They are made of the loose branches of the pine-tree neatly laid on the top of one another to form an even round mat, these branches being so constantly renewed that they always give off a delicious fresh smell. The next surprise is the enormous white porcelain stove or oven found in every room; so enormous are these *kakelugn* that they reach the ceiling, and are sometimes four feet long and three or four feet deep. The floors of all the rooms are painted raw-sienna colour, and very brightly polished. To our mind it seems a pity not to stain the natural wood instead of thus spoiling its beauty, but yellow paint

is at present the fashion, and fashion is always beautiful, some folk say. In winter carpets and rugs are put down, but during summer the rooms are swept daily (at all events in the country) with a broom made of a bundle of fresh, green birch leaves – somewhat primitive, but very efficacious, for when the leaves are a little damp they lick up dust in a wonderful manner. These little brooms are constantly renewed, being literally nothing more than a bundle of birch boughs tied tightly together. They cost nothing in a land where trees grow so fast that it is difficult for a peasant to keep the ground near his house free from their encroachments.

In truth, Finland is utterly charming. Its lakes, its canals, its rivers, its forests, are beautiful, and its customs are interesting. It is primitive and picturesque, and its people are most kind and hospitable, but – and oh! it is a very big *but* indeed, there exists a Finnish pest.

Strolling through those beautiful dark pines and silver birch woods, he is ever by one's side; sailing or rowing over the lakes, that Finnish demon intrudes himself. Sitting quietly at meals, we know the fiend is under the table, while, as we rest on the balcony in the evening, watching a glorious sun sinking to rest an hour before midnight, he whispers in our ears or peeps into our eyes. He is here, there, and everywhere; he is omnipresent – this curse of Finland. He is very small, his colour is such that he is hardly visible, and he is sly and crafty, so that the unwary stranger little guesses that his constant and almost unseen companion will speedily bring havoc to his comfort and dismay into his life. The



little wretch is called *Mygga* in Swedish or *Itikainen* in Finnish, the Finnish words being pronounced exactly as they are written, in the German style of calling i, e, etc.

In English he is a mosquito of a very virulent description, and in Finland he is a peculiarly knowing little brute, and shows a hideous partiality for strangers, not apparently caring much for the taste of Finnish blood.

He loves Englishwomen as inordinately as they loathe him, and, personally, the writer suffered such tortures that her ankles became hot and swollen, and at last, in spite of lavender oil, ammonia and camphor baths, grew so stiff that walking became positively painful, and her ears and eyes mere distorted lumps of inflamed flesh! Therefore, dear lady reader, be prepared when you visit Midgeland to become absolutely hideous and unrecognisable. When a kindly servant brings a rug to wind round your legs under the dinner-table on the balcony, gladly accept that rug.

There are not merely mosquitoes but – but – that awful experience must be told in another chapter.

As a town *Wiborg* is nothing to boast of. There is nothing very remarkable about any ordinary Finnish town, with the exception of the capital, *Helsingfors*, where all the best buildings are centered and built of stone. Most of the towns are modern and generally ugly, because, being of wood, they are so apt to be burnt down, that architects give neither time nor thought to their structural beauty, or, even when not so destroyed, the original

houses – which seldom last over a hundred years – have fallen out of repair and been replaced by undecorative wooden structures. Stone houses are few and far between, and, as a rule, the wooden dwellings are only one storey high, because fires in such low buildings are more easily extinguished, and, land not being of much value, the space required for such edifices can easily be afforded. These wooden dwellings are usually painted dark red in the smaller towns, and lighter shades in the larger, while here and there on the walls are to be seen iron rosettes and other queer sort of ornaments, really used as a means of keeping the house together. No one, not even a Finn, could call the average native town beautiful, although some excellent stone educational buildings are springing up here and there.

The capital is charmingly situated and has several very nice buildings, and is therefore an exception, but even in the case of *Wiborg* the shop windows are small and uninviting, the streets are shockingly laid with enormous boulder stones and sometimes even bits of rock, while pavements, according to our ideas, hardly exist.

The religion being Lutheran there are no beautiful churches, only simple whitewashed edifices, extremely plain inside, with an organ at one end, an altar and perhaps one picture at the other. In the case of *Kuopio* (which town possesses a Bishop) the cathedral is only lighted by candles, and, during the service, a man goes round continually putting out those that have burnt too low with a wet sponge tied to the end of a stick!

One of the chief characteristics of the towns, most noticeable to a stranger, is that none of the windows are ever open. The Finn dreads fresh air as much as he dreads *daily* ablutions, and therefore any room a stranger enters at any hour is certain to be stuffy and oppressive.

One day in *Wiborg*, overcome with the intense heat, we went into a confectioner's where ices were provided, to get cool. Imagine our horror to find that the double windows were hermetically sealed, although the café invited the patronage of strangers by placards stating "ices were for sale." What irony! To eat an ice in a hothouse as a means of getting cool.

*Wiborg* has a big market, and every day a grand trade is done in that large open space, and as we wandered from one cart of meat to another of vegetables or black bread, or peeped at the quaint pottery or marvellous baskets made from shavings of wood neatly plaited, our attention was arrested by fish tartlets. We paused to look; yes, a sort of pasty the shape of a saucer was adorned in the middle with a number of small fish about the size of sardines. They were made of *suola kala* (salted fish), eaten raw by the peasants; we now saw them in *Wiborg* for the first time, though, unhappily, not for the last, since these fish tartlets haunted us at every stage of our journey up country.

What weird and wonderful foods one eats and often enjoys when travelling.

Strange dishes, different languages, quaint customs, and unexpected characteristics all add to the charms of a new land;

but it requires brains to admire anything new.

Fools are always stubborn, even in their appreciation of the beautiful.

## CHAPTER III

# FINNISH BATHS

No one can be many days in Finland without hearing murmurs of the bath-house.

A Finnish bath once taken by man or woman can never be forgotten!

A real native bath is one of the specialities of the country. Even in the old songs of the *Kalevala* they speak of the "cleansing and healing vapours of the heated bath-room."

Poets have described the bath in verse, artists have drawn it on canvas, and singers have warbled forth its charms; nevertheless, it is not every traveller who has penetrated the strange mystery. Most strange and most mysterious it is. But I anticipate.

Every house in the country, however humble that house may be, boasts its *bastu*, or bath-house, called in Finnish *Sauna*. As we passed along the country roads, noting the hay piled up on a sort of tent erection made of pine trunks, to dry in the sun before being stowed away into small wooden houses for protection during the winter, or nearly drove over one of those strange long-haired pigs, the bristles on whose backs reminded one of a hog-maned polo pony, one saw these *bastus* continually. Among the cluster of little buildings that form the farm, the bath-house, indeed, stands forth alone, and is easily recognisable, one

of its walls, against which the stove stands, being usually black, even on the outside, from smoke.

Every Saturday, year in, year out, that stove is heated, and the whole family have a bath – not singly, oh dear, no, but altogether, men, women, and children; farmer, wife, brothers, sisters, labourers, friends, and the dogs too, if they have a mind; so that once in each week the entire population of Finland is clean, although few of them know what daily ablutions, even of the most primitive kind, mean, while hot water is almost as difficult to procure in *Suomi* as a great auk's egg in England.

Naturally any institution so purely national as the Finnish *bastu* was worth investigating – in fact, could not be omitted from our programme. Bathing with the peasants themselves, however, being impossible, we arranged to enjoy the extraordinary pleasure at a friend's house, where we could be duly washed by one of her own servants; for, be it understood, there is always one servant in every better-class establishment who understands the *bastu*, and can, and does wash the family.

When *she* is washed, we unfortunately omitted to inquire. In towns, such as *Helsingfors*, there are professional women-washers, who go from house to house to bathe and massage men and women alike. Theirs is a regular trade, and as the higher class of the profession receive about a shilling for "attending" each bath given at a private house, the employment is not one to be despised. Neither is it, as proved by the fact that there are over 300 public bathing-women in little Finland.

On the eventful night of our initiation, supper was over, the house-party and guests were all assembled on the balcony, the women engaged in needlework, and the men smoking cigarettes, when *Saima*, the Finnish servant, arrived to solemnly announce in a loud tone that the English lady's bath was ready. Taking a fond farewell of the family, I marched solemnly behind the flaxen-haired *Saima*, who had thoroughly entered into the spirit of the joke of giving an English lady a Finnish bath, neither the bather nor attendant being able to understand one word of what the other spoke. Down an avenue overshadowed by trees we proceeded, getting a peep of a perfectly glorious sunset which bathed one side of the lake in yellow hues, while the other was lighted by an enormous blood-red moon, for in those Northern climes there are many strange natural effects far more beautiful than in the South. It was a wonderful evening, and I paused to consider which was the more beautiful, the departing day or the coming night, both of which were fighting for supremacy.

*Saima* would brook no delay, however, so I had to hurry on. Immediately before us was the *bastu*— a wee wooden house like a small Swiss chalet, the outer room, where I undressed, containing a large oven. The inner room boasted only one small window, through which the departing day did not shine very brilliantly, luckily for my modesty. Its furniture was only a large-sized tin bath filled with cold water, opposite to which were seven very wide wooden steps like a staircase, twelve feet wide perhaps, the top step forming a kind of platform where there was just room

to sit without one's head touching the tarred ceiling above. The steps and the platform were covered with straw – Finnish fashion – for the great occasion.

I wondered what next, but had not much time for speculation, for *Saima*– who only took off her outer dress – grasped me by the hand, her face aglow with the intense heat, led me up the wooden staircase, and signed her will that I should sit on the straw-strewn platform afore honourably mentioned.

Oh, the heat! Many of us know Turkish baths; but then we take them gradually, whereas in the *bastu* one plunges into volcanic fires at once. Blinking in the dim light, I found that beside us was a brick-built stove, for which the fire, as I had noticed while disrobing, is in the outer chamber, and when the washing-woman threw a pail of water upon the surface of the great heated stones, placed for the purpose inside the stove, the steam ascended in volumes, and the temperature went up, until I exclaimed, in one of the few Swedish sentences I knew, "*Mycket hett*" (very hot), at which agonised remark *Saima* laughed uproariously, and, nodding and smiling, fetched another pail of water from the cold bath, and threw its contents on the brick furnace in order that more steaming fumes might ascend. Almost stifled I blinked, and gasped, and groaned by turns, repeating again and again, "*Mycket hett*," "*alltför hett*" (too hot), "*Tack så mycket*" (thank you), in tones of anguish. Much amused, *Saima*– who, be it understood, was a Swedish-speaking Finn – stood smiling cheerfully at my discomfiture; but, happily, at last she seemed to think I might



have had enough, for, after waving my hands hopelessly to the accompaniment of "*Nej tack, nej tack*" (no thank you), she apparently understood and desisted.

A moment later, through the steam, her smiling face ascended the stairs, with a pail of hot water in one hand, and a lump of soft soap in the other, on which was a large bundle of white fibre, something like hemp. Dipping this in the pail, she soon made a lather with the soap, and, taking up limb after limb, scrubbed hard and long – scrubbed until my skin tingled, and in the damp mysterious heat I began to wonder how much of my body would emerge from the ordeal. This scrubbing was a long process, and if the Finns wash one another as industriously as *Saima* washed me, no one in Finland should ever be dirty, although most of them must lose several skins a year. Pails of water were then thrown over me, over the straw, over everything, and I heard the soapy water gurgling away into the lake below, which was covered with yellow and white water-lilies. Lilies cannot object to soap, or they would never bloom in Finland as they do.

"*Mycket bra*" (very good), I called again and again, hoping that appreciation might perhaps make *Saima* desist, as the exclamations at the heat did not seem to alarm her. More water was thrown on to the steaming bricks, and *Saima* retired, returning immediately with a great bundle of birch leaves, tied up with a string, such as I had often seen her on former occasions sweeping the floors with. Dipping the branches of the birch into a pail of hot water she proceeded to beat her victim all over!

Yes, beat me, beat me hard. She laughed, and I laughed; but the more I laughed the harder she thumped, till the sharp edges of the leaves left almost a sting, while the strong healthy *Saima* beat me harder and harder, dipping the leaves into hot water continually, and grinning cheerily all the time.

The peasantry in Finland are occasionally good enough to wash one another, and stories are told of a dozen of them sitting in rows on the wooden steps, each man vigorously beating his neighbour with birch boughs.

At harvest time, when the heat is very great, and the work very hard, labourers have a bath *every night*! Frequently, after our wonderful experience at *Ilkeäsaari*, we saw, while journeying farther into the country, shoals of human beings strolling off to enjoy their *bastu* or *Sauna*.

It was a weird and wonderful experience. I was really beginning to feel the heat dreadful after an hour, and was confident the blood must be galloping through my veins. Finally the good-tempered Finnish maid appeared to be of the same mind, for she fetched a pail of cold water, and, pouring a good drop on my head – which made me jump – she dipped her birch branches therein and switched them over me. Had I followed true Finnish fashion I should then have taken a midnight plunge straight into the lake outside – or in winter taken a roll in the snow – but, our bath being rather more aristocratic, I only descended the slippery steps, really gasping with the heat and treatment, and jumped into that bath of cold water previously mentioned; before

– clad only in burning hot towels – returning to the outer room to dress.

I puffed and panted, and, quite exhausted, longed for a Turkish divan and quiet rest before, robed in fur coats and thick under-garments, I trotted home to bed.

The bath was taken, the mystery unravelled; I had been washed according to native ideas and customs, and understood what the whole thing meant. Some pleasures are too nearly allied to pain to be really pleasant.

Whether it was the heat, or exhaustion, or the loss of one skin or many, I know not; but after a glass of *mjöd*, that most delicious and refreshing of Finnish drinks, I slept splendidly – the first time after weeks of anxiety and grief – and felt fit next morning for any amount of hard work, even for a journey to Russia through Finland, though we did not speak or understand the language of either country. Adversity may develop character, but it is mighty unpleasant.

The Finnish peasant thinks nothing of being seen by his friends or his neighbours in a state of nature, *apropos* of which peculiarity a well-known general told us the following story —

He had been inspecting a district, and for his benefit parades, etc., were held. Some hours afterwards he went for a ride, and on returning to the village he passed a *Sauna*, where the folk were enjoying their primitive kind of Turkish bath. According to the usual custom one of the men came out to dress himself; but, having left his clothes in a little pile some twenty feet from

the *Sauna* door, he had hardly looked out his things when he noticed that the general was upon him. Though not in the least confused by the fact of his nakedness, for which he made no apology, he nevertheless exclaimed in tones of horror, "The general! the general!" and began rummaging among the articles on the ground, till at last he pulled forth a wig, which, all in a hurry, he clapped on his head wrong side up, then standing proudly erect he saluted the general as he passed.

The poor fellow evidently considered his wig of much more importance than his shirt. Modesty is a matter of climate and custom, just as morals are a matter of geography.

Another amusing story is told of an elegant Englishman who had heard so much of Finnish baths that he determined to try one; having arrived at some small town, he told the *Isvoschtschik* to go to the *bastu*. Away they drove, and finally drew up at a very nice house, where he paid the twopence halfpenny fare for his cab, rang the bell, and was admitted by a woman servant. He only knew half a dozen words in Swedish, but repeated *bastu* to the smiling lass, being surprised at the elegance of the furniture in the room into which he had been shown. The girl smiled again and left him. However, thinking it was all right, he proceeded to undress, and, having entirely disrobed, he stood ready to be escorted into the bath, and accordingly rang for the woman to come and wash and massage him. A few moments later the door opened, and a very beautiful young dame stood before him. She was no masseuse, but the wife of the pastor, into whose house

he had come by mistake owing to his want of knowledge of the pronunciation of the language. Tableau!

We had many curious experiences when bathing in the lakes, and seemed to excite as much interest in the peasantry of Finland as a Chinaman with his pigtail would in a small country village in England. At *Sordavala*, for instance, there was a charming little bath-house belonging to our next host, for which we got the key and prepared to enjoy a swim. A bathing-dress was not to be bought for love or money. No one had ever heard of such a thing, but my sister's modesty forbade her appearing without one so near a town, and, now that we had left our kind hostess at *Ilkeäsaari*, she could no longer borrow one. Through the town of *Sordavala*, therefore, we marched from shop to shop until we lighted upon a sort of store where linen goods were procurable. Blue and white-striped galatea exactly suited the purpose, as it would be light for packing, and the colour could not run. We bought it, we paid for it, and home we marched. In less than an hour that gown was cut out by the aid of a pair of nail scissors, without any kind or sort of pattern whatever, and was sewn up ready for use. Out my sister went to bathe, triumphant; but so rare was a bathing-dress that the onlookers thought the English lady had fallen into the water by mischance with all her clothes on.

My sister had hardly taken a plunge from the spring-board into the water below, before every man, woman, and child in the neighbourhood began exclaiming one to the other, "The English

lady has tumbled in," and, absolutely, before the bather's head could appear again from the depths of the water they had all run to the bank to have a look at the phenomenon, more prepared to rescue her from drowning than to see her swimming far out into the lake with clothes on. Of course their interest was heightened by the appearance of the dress and cap, for even the better-class Finlanders very rarely wear any covering on their bodies while bathing, and as the women never dive or swim under water a cap is not necessary to keep their hair dry. They evidently considered my sister and her attire something remarkably funny.

Again at *Iisalmi*, another place of some importance, when we went down to the bath-house we found it surrounded by dozens of boys of all ages and descriptions, who were enjoying themselves gamboling in the water.

A Finnish gentleman of the town, to whom we had an introduction, kindly came with us to unlock the door and see that everything was satisfactory, and he quickly explained to the boys they must go away into the next cove as strange ladies were about to bathe. Very reluctantly they went, and, wishing us good-bye and a pleasant dip, he went too.

We undressed, donned our aquatic attire, plunged into the water, to discover, in a few moments, a row of grinning spectators, varying in age from three years old to thirty, sitting up on the banks like monkeys in a cage, thoroughly enjoying the joke. They laughed and they chatted, they pointed, they waved their arms, and they evidently considered our performances most

extraordinary.

These are only two instances out of many, for everywhere we went we caused interest and amusement.

One of our party through Northern Finland was a magnificent swimmer. He had a cheery way of jumping into a boat, rowing himself far out into the lake, and then taking a header which excited the admiration of all beholders. At *Kuopio* he rowed far out as was his usual habit, while the old women of the bath-house watched his performance from the shore. One minute went by, and he did not reappear; two minutes went by, and they still did not see his head. "He is drowned, he is drowned," they shrieked in despair, and great was the hubbub and dismay which ensued before he came up again smiling some distance from the spot where he had originally plunged from the boat. Besides being a strong swimmer, he was a remarkable diver, and if two minutes and a half be the length of time a human being can breathe under water, then we can safely say two minutes and a half was the length of time he always stayed, for in every town we halted he invariably caused consternation in the heart of some one, who thought the stranger in their midst had gone to a watery grave. He preferred the boat for the sake of his dive, but, as a rule, every one in Finland bathes from the bath-houses, where there are little rooms for undressing, in front of which a big stretch of the lake is walled in as a swimming bath. A penny is the usual charge, and an extra penny for the towel.

Although every Finlander bathes, as, indeed, they must do

during their hot summers, every Finlander does not swim, and it is a remarkable thing that among the women, who go daily – sometimes twice a day – to the swimming bath, most of them will sit on the steps or haul themselves round by means of a rope, and never learn how to keep themselves afloat without artificial help.

Walking through the park at *Kuopio* one day with the Baroness Michaeloff, my attention was arrested by the extraordinary number of ant hills we passed.

"They are used for baths," she explained.

"For what?" I asked, thinking I could not have heard aright.

"For baths," she repeated; "formerly these *muurahais kylpy* (ant-heap baths) were quite commonly employed as a cure for rheumatism and many other ailments; but now I fancy it is only the peasants who take them, or very old folk, perhaps."

"Can an ant bath be had here?"

"Certainly. But surely you don't think of taking one?"

"Indeed I do, though. I am trying all the baths of Finland, and an ant-heap bath must not be omitted, if it is possible to have such a thing."

The kindly lady laughed heartily as she said, "Mais, Madame, est-ce que possible que vous vouliez prendre un de ces bains?"

"Certainment, cela me fait plaisir," I replied, and accordingly we then and there marched off to the bath-house to see how my desire might best be accomplished.

The whole matter did not take long to arrange. Next day, at ten o'clock, the *muurahais kylpy* bath was to be ready, and, in spite



of all the chaff round the governor's dinner-table that night about my queer experiment, nothing daunted I presented myself at the appointed hour. The head *Fröken*, who luckily spoke German, explained that my bath was ready.

Into a dear little room I went, and lo, the hot water in the bath was brown! while, floating on the surface, I saw a small linen sack, shaped like a pillow-case, securely tied at the end. The cushion contained the ant-heap, on which boiling water had been poured, so that the animals were really dead, the colour of the water having come from their bodies, and the room was impregnated with the odour of pines.

Did I shiver at the thought? Well, a little, perhaps; nevertheless, I tumbled into the warm water, and was scrubbed Finnish fashion by the old bath-woman, with her scrubbing brush, her soft soap, her birch branches, and, afterwards, her massage (given under the water), the *Fröken* sitting all the while on the sofa, chatting affably, and describing how the peasants omitted the sacks and simply threw the ant-heap *au naturel* into the bath.

The small room had two doors – one opening into the passage, and one into the douche-chamber, which also served for another bathroom. Presently the first of the doors opened, and a girl, without apology, entered and took away a sponge. Did this intrusion make me feel shy? Well, you see, one gets over shyness after being washed like a baby once or twice; but she had hardly disappeared before the other door opened, giving admission to a

second woman, who came in and deposited a towel; a moment later some one else appeared, and after a good stare departed; then came a fourth on some pretext or other, and I was beginning to think of the queer stories told of Japan, where the whole paper wall slides back, and the natives enjoy the spectacle of English folk bathing, when yet a fifth came into the room. This was too much, and I asked the *Fröken* why they had all forgotten so many things.

She laughed merrily.

"I'm afraid it's curiosity to see an English lady having an ant-heap bath, so please don't be angry," and she laughed again.

A spectacle, verily! But who could be angry with such innocent people? I had come to try a strange Finnish bath which interested me – why should they not come to see a queer Englishwoman if it amused them? Flinging shyness to the winds, therefore, I smiled and grinned at the next woman who entered as though I liked being on view and she went away happy.

What was a *muurahais kylpy* like? Candidly, it resembled any other ordinary warm bath, only the water was very black, and there was a strange aromatic odour about it; but there was nothing horrible in the experience, although I had a good douche – three kinds of good douches in fact – for the sake of peace of mind afterwards.

A douche is delightful, especially on a hot day, and the bath-woman was particularly anxious that I should try the various kinds arranged from the floor, the ceiling, and the walls of the

room.

"But," I explained to the lady with a good deal of patting and gesticulation, "hair a yard long cannot be wet every day, even in the summer time, and to have a shower-bath was impossible, as she could not lend a cap."

She looked distressed, but she was not going to be beaten, and beckoning for me to wait, she departed, returning a few minutes afterwards with a small white china basin; this she put on her head upside down, to show me that it would serve the purpose of a cap, and holding the rim with both hands she moved it round and round, in a way which indicated that wherever the water of the shower-bath was falling most was the side to move the basin to.

It was an original idea this shower-bath trick, and it answered very well, but then baths in Finland are an art, and Finland without its bath-houses would not be Finland at all, so I had the shower feeling like a plum pudding inside a basin.

The reason that the *muurahais kylpy* bath is efficacious for rheumatism and of strengthening property is due to the amount of formic acid the ants contain. Added to which, these industrious little animals live upon the pine needles, and therefore suck all the strength from the most juicy part of the turpentine pine, and, as we all know, turpentine is much employed in all kinds of embrocation used for rheumatism, lumbago, and sprains. Soon we shall give up these appliances in favour of inoculation maybe.

The next strange bath we experienced was in a waterfall, and was yet more remarkable. Yes, in a real waterfall where a tremendous volume of water dashed down about ten feet. It was at *Kajana*, a town lying on a stretch of the famous *Uleå* rapids. The real fall is about forty feet, over which not even the tar-boats – described in a later chapter – dare venture; consequently, two locks, each containing twenty feet of water, have been made for their use. No one could swim, even in the calmer waters above or below the locks, because of the cataracts, so a bath-house has been erected beside the fall, to which the water is brought, by means of a wooden trough, to a sort of small chamber, where it rushes in. That waterfall bath was a most alarming place. It was almost dark as we entered the little chamber through which the water passed.

How shall we describe it? It was a small room about eight or ten feet square, with a wooden floor and walls. The top of the wall facing us did not join the roof by about a foot, so as to enable the water to rush in, and the bottom of the wall behind us did not reach the floor by another foot, so as to allow the water to rush out. Some half-dozen stairs descended from the platform on which we stood to the floor below, but as the only light came in where the falling water was always dripping, the walls were soaking wet, and therefore quite black. It was dull and mystic to say the least of it. Once the full force of the water was turned on by the large wooden arm, it poured in with such tremendous force from about ten feet above, that in a moment the floor below

was a bubbling, seething, frothing pool, and as we descended the steps into this bath, now some two or three feet deep, the force of the stream was so great that we had actually to hold on by the rail of the stairs to keep our feet at all on the slippery floor below. It was a lovely sensation. A piece of bacon bubbling about in the fat of the frying-pan must experience something like the same movement as we did, bobbing up and down in this rapidly flowing stream. It almost bumped us over, it lifted us off our feet, and yet, as the water swirled round us, the feeling was delicious, and its very coldness was most enjoyable after the heat outside, and the dust we had travelled through.

As we grew courageous and accustomed to the darkness, we walked more under the fall itself, but the water, simply thumping on our backs and shoulders, came with such force, that we felt exactly as if we were being well pummelled with a pair of boxing-gloves, or being violently massaged, a delicious tingling sensation being the result. It washed our hair and rinsed it in a way it had never been rinsed before; but the force of the water was so great that it was impossible to keep our whole head under the fall for more than a second at a time, as it almost stunned us. The volume was so strong that it would have rendered us quickly insensible. We women all emerged from the waterfall-bath like drowned rats; or, to put it more poetically, like mermaids, feeling splendidly refreshed, and wider awake than we had probably ever felt in our lives before. The magnitude and force of that waterfall-bath makes me gasp even now to remember. It requires

a stout heart to stand underneath it; nevertheless, how delicious the experience to the travel-stained and weary traveller, who had been suffering from tropical sun, and driving for days along dusty roads in springless carts.

We four women had taken the opportunity of washing our powdered hair, the accumulation of many days' dust, back to its natural colour, and, as we all possessed locks which fell considerably below our waists, they would not dry in five minutes, therefore, each with a towel over her shoulders, we came up on to the little pier, hat in hand, and our hair hanging down our backs. It certainly was somewhat primitive to sit all in a row, with our backs to the sun, on the fashionable promenade or pier of the town. But the town was not big, and the fashion was not great, and we gradually screwed up our courage, and finally walked home through the streets in the same way, carrying our hats, with towels over our shoulders for cloaks. That was all very well, but when we reached the small hotel the dinner was already on the table, for we had dallied so long over our bath that our gentlemen were impatiently waiting for our advent, and persuaded us not to stop to dress our hair as they were starving, so down we sat, just as we were, to partake of the meal.

But one hardly ever does anything uncommon or a little out of the ordinances of society, in this world, without being sorry for it afterwards, and having put off struggling with knots, tangled plaits, and hair-pins, until after dinner, we were horrified when the door opened and three unknown men marched in to join

our meal. There was no escape; we were caught like rats in cages. What on earth they thought of strange women sitting in towels, and with dishevelled locks, we dare not think. Imagine our confusion.

One was a lieutenant in the army; he was young and shy, and his discomfiture at the scene was even greater than our own. The second proved to be a delightful man; a young engineer who was employed in planning the route for the new railway to *Kajana*. He told us that he had been for over a month travelling through the forests and bogs of the country, surveying for the best route for the projected line, and that the wooden staves we had noticed so often along the road, as we drove from *Kuopio*, were the marks laid down as the most suitable direction for the railway to take.

He had heard of us, for some peasants had told him, with great excitement, that morning that a party of eight people were driving through *Savolax*, and some of them were English. Poor man, he told us of his sufferings in the bogs, and how in some of the low-lying districts the mosquitoes had tormented him so awfully that he had been quite ill. Even Finlanders suffer sometimes, it would seem; therefore strangers need not complain. Sir Ronald Ross has done so much to obliterate the malaria-carrying mosquito, perhaps he would like to turn his attention to Finland and Lapland where mosquitoes are a veritable curse to enjoyment if not to health.

In spite of our dishevelled locks, we after all enjoyed a very pleasant meal.

## CHAPTER IV

# A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY

Having torn ourselves away from our kind friends at *Ilkeäsaari* for a time, and digressed from our story to describe Finnish baths, we must now own that the prospect of a night in a monastery was very exciting – more especially when that monastery chanced to belong to Russia, and to stand alone on an island in the middle of the great *Ladoga* lake, which no doubt once joined together the White Sea and the Gulf of Finland. It is the largest lake in Europe, and celebrated also for the cold temperature of its water, which, in spite of its vast size, is always more or less frozen over in winter. It never warms in summer, and therefore there can be little or no bathing around its shores.

*Sordavala*, where we embarked – of which more anon – is Finnish, staunch Finnish, while *Valamo*, where we landed, is a Russian monastery; therefore no love exists between the two centres, and few arrangements are made for the comfort and transport of strangers, with the result that a couple of steamers go and come as they like; no one knew when they would start, and much less when they would return. Nevertheless, on one eventful Sunday morning, the longest day of the year, we were hoisted on board the *Baallam* (the V, true Russian fashion, had turned into a B) from our little boat below, and seated ourselves comfortably



on the vessel which belongs to the famous monastery. Though we had been in many ships, manned by many types of sailors, from the swarthy Moor to the short sturdy Iclander, the agile Italian to the fearless Norseman, we here encountered a class of sailor we had never seen before.

He was tall and lank and lean; he wore a sort of long gown of black cloth, green on the shoulders with age, and frayed at the elbows, while a girdle of plaited wool encircled his waist. He had no collar or cuffs, but his feet were encased in long sea-boots, which peeped out from under his petticoats, and his hair – well, his hair hung over his shoulders almost to his waist, and on his head was placed a high round black-cloth cap. He was like no class or form of sailor we had ever seen before. He was something weird and uncanny. His face was neither bronzed by the sea nor tanned by the sun, but had an unhealthy pallor about it, and his sunken eyes looked wistfully over a world of which he seemingly knew nothing. Yet he was a sailor, this antithesis of a Jack Tar, and he was also – a Russian monk! His hands were none of the cleanest, his clothes none of the sweetest; but it was not salt water that made them so – it was oil and age.

We were well armed with an introduction to the *Igumen* or head of the monastery, the sort of cardinal or bishop of the island. And we were also provided with a large basket of provisions, since no one can get anything at *Valamo* except such food as the monks eat and cook themselves, not but that their food is generally good enough as simple fare goes; but at the precise

time of our visit there happened to be a great fast in the Greek Church, during which it is impossible to secure even milk and butter, the monks being forbidden such luxuries. The only things obtainable were black bread, soup made from cabbage, groats, a sort of buck-wheat porridge cooked in oil, and small beer or tea. On such diet or on potato soup, the seventy monks and four hundred probationers live for *six weeks* in the height of summer, as well as at Easter and other festivals. Oil is used profusely in cooking at such periods as a sort of penance. At other seasons milk and butter are allowed, fish is eaten on Sundays, and more farinaceous and vegetable foods enjoyed, although strong beer, wine, and meat are never touched.

Knowing the difficulty of getting food of any kind during one of these strict fasts, and not being particularly devoted to rancid oil, we asked a friend to be sure and order for us a good basket of eatables, and, among other things, a fowl.

It may be well to mention that Frau von Lilly accompanied us on our trip to *Sordavala*, *Valamo*, and *Imatra*, acting as guide, cicerone, and friend. Being an excellent linguist, and well versed in the manners and customs of her country, her aid was invaluable; indeed, it is to her we owe much of the success of our summer jaunt to Finland. At *Sordavala*, however, we were joined for a few days by a young Finlander, whose family name is a household word in *Suomi*, and who, though still youthful, having inherited the wisdom of his ancestors, and kindly patronising ways, proved such an excellent courier,

organiser, and companion, that in joke we christened him "Grandpapa," finding his wisdom far beyond his years.

Poor Grandpapa! How we teased the youth, how we imposed upon his good nature; but through it all he emerged victorious, and has the gratification of knowing he finally escorted two Englishwomen through some of the wild untrodden paths of his native land, and shipped them for home, alive and well, and none the worse for strange experiences – experiences not unmixed at times with a spice of danger.

Such were our travelling companions, joined later by Grandpapa's handsome sisters, and a very delightful student, whose father is one of the best-known men in Finland; to say nothing of a young baron, a magister, and a General, who accompanied us for a day or two at different points along our route, and then left us again, to attend other calls of duty; often our party increased to six, eight, or ten, so we were always well looked after.

To Grandpapa was entrusted the ordering of a fowl for *Valamo*, for the party of four.

"What? A whole fowl?" he asked.

"Certainly. Surely you would not provide half a fowl for four people, would you?"

"No. But I might provide four fowls for one person, which would be more suitable."

We smiled a sickly smile, at what we supposed to be an attempt at Finnish humour too profound for our weak intellects

to grasp, or perhaps our smile veiled the hidden sarcasm we felt within at such poor fun.

Grandpapa forgot the fowl; but in his sleep he suddenly awoke from a dreadful nightmare, during the horrors of which that cackling creature glared upon him in the enormity of his sin. Next morning he was up before the chickens' elderly friends, the cocks, began to crow, and ere they had completed their morning song, well – the stock of the farmyard was lessened.

Before we steamed away from the little pier, the basket of eatables arrived, and we went off happy in the possession of a fowl, sardines, cold eggs, tea, white bread and butter, a large bottle of milk, to say nothing of a small cellar of birch-bark plaitings which formed a basket, containing Lager beer and soda water. All this, as written down, may seem a too goodly supply, but be it remembered we were three healthy women who had to be provisioned for thirty-six hours; Grandpapa did not come with us to the monastery.

Two hours' steam over the northern portion of that enormous lake brought forty islands, which form a group called *Valamo*, in sight, with the great white and blue-domed Russian church standing out clearly against a lovely sky. This building took four years to finish. The monks built nearly all of it themselves, made the bricks, carved the wood, painted the walls, ceilings, etc., and did all the goldsmith's work for lamps and altars. It is very massive, very great, catholic in its gaudy style, but sadly wanting tone. Much may, however, be accomplished by the kindly hand

of time, which often renders the crudest things artistic, as it gently heals the wounds of grief.

We were struck by the size of the place; close beside the monastery and large church was a huge building, a sort of hotel for visitors, containing two thousand beds! They are small rooms and small beds, 'tis true, but at times of great pilgrimages and Greek festivals they are quite full. No one pays; hospitality, such as it is, is free; the visitor merely gives what he likes to the church on leaving. But the monks, who dispense hospitality gratis, do a roaring trade in photographs and rosaries, and are very pressing to sell them to strangers, not that they need be, as the monastery is noted for its riches. It certainly does not display any sign of wealth on the backs of its inhabitants, for some of their long coats looked green and yellow with age, and we were not surprised at their shabby appearance when we learned that they each only had one coat a year in which to do all their work, no matter how dirty that work might be. Are they not there to mortify the flesh and learn economy? What is the want of raiment when compared with the wants of the soul?

They are given triennially an enormous thick fur coat, cap, and gloves, so their wardrobes are not large, and some of the men seem to take little interest in keeping even their few garments clean or tidy.

Beyond this hostelry with its two thousand beds, which was built by the monks to house their better-class visitors, is yet another large building for the use of the poorer pilgrims, who

sometimes come in hundreds at a time to do penance at this famous monastery. Besides the two vast barracks for strangers, are stables for eighty horses, a shed for sixty cows, large gardens, piers, and storehouses, so that *Valamo* is really a huge colony, a little world, not entirely inhabited by men, however, for many of the pilgrims are women, while several of the scrubbers and cleaners in the hostleries are old wives.

Leaving the boat we walked up a hill, and then up some wide steps, behind the white stone copings of which purple and white lilac nodded and scented the air. This staircase was more like one in the famous Borghesa Gardens at Rome than anything we could have expected to meet with in the north-east of Europe, mid-way between Britain and Siberia. Passing under an archway we found ourselves in a huge courtyard; just opposite to where we stood was the refectory. On the right the church, Or rather two churches, for the one is really built over the other, appeared looking very imposing. All around the quadrangle were the cells. Each monk had one for himself, as well as a novice to attend on him, such are his privileges; in the other cells two novices are housed together, and have to take it in turns to keep their small and comfortless abode clean and tidy.

It was a wondrous sight that met our view. The mid-day meal was just over when we arrived, four hundred and seventy men were streaming out of the dining-hall. How strange they looked, each man clothed in a long black robe like a catholic priest, and each wearing his beard unshaven and his hair long, for, in

imitation of our Lord, they let their hair grow to any length, never touching it with steel; the locks of some few fell almost to their waist, but, as a rule, a man's hair does not seem to grow longer than his shoulders, although cases have been known where it has reached the knee. Strange to say, at *Valamo* most of the monks had curls, and a lovely sort of auburn seemed the prevailing colour of their hair. If they had only kept it nicely, the wavy locks and pretty warm colour would have been charming, but in most instances it was dirty and unkempt. Their faces and hands were as dirty as their coats, and altogether the idea that cleanliness is next to godliness seemed to be totally wanting in that island; still there were exceptions, and two of them luckily fell to our lot.

We stood on the steps of the church transfixed. It seemed such a strange scene. It was no religious ceremony, merely the return of the monks and novices from their mid-day meal in the refectory, but yet the spectacle was fascinating.

Out of the door came the great *Igumen*; his face was kindly, and his locks hung over his shoulders. His cloth hat almost covered his eyes, and his long black veil fell behind him like a train. A crucifix and a cross lay upon his breast, and he walked with the stately tread of a Pope. He was followed by his monks clad in the same high straight cloth hats – like top hats in shape but minus the brim – from which also fell black-cloth veils. When in church long-trained skirts are added by the monks, who remain covered during most of the service; every one else uncovering.

On walked the *Igumen* with lordly mien, monks, novices, and pilgrims bowing and crouching before him, some of them kneeling and touching the ground with their foreheads many times, others kissing his hands, or even the hems of his garments. Each and all were pleading for some holy privilege.

The lower grades followed the priests respectfully. Novices of the monastery kissed the ordinary monks' hands, for the latter of course are holy and worthy of much reverence, or the monks and novices fell upon one another's necks as they did in the old Bible days. We thought at first they were kissing, but we soon saw their lips merely touched first one shoulder and then another, a more usual salutation than a handshake in the monastery. Such obeisance from man to man was wonderful, and the overpowering delight in the faces of the pilgrims was striking, as they accomplished the deeds of reverence they had come so many hundreds of miles shoeless to perform. Sometimes as many as three thousand pilgrims arrive in one day.

To the great *Igumen*, as he neared his door, we gave our letter of introduction; he quickly glanced at it, then, turning to a handsome young novice standing near, spoke a few words, and, with a wave of his hand, a sweet smile and distant bow, passed on.

Forward came the young man. He was about six feet high, thin and lithesome, very cleanly and gentlemanly in appearance, with the most beautiful face imaginable, the sort of spiritual countenance one finds in the old masters when they strove to represent St. John, and his soft auburn hair fell on his shoulders



with a round curl at the end. He was a type of a beautiful boy, twenty years of age perhaps.

Doffing his black cloth cap, he said —

"Vielleicht die Damen sprechen deutsch?" (Perhaps the ladies talk German?)

"Gewiss" (certainly), we answered, only too delighted to be addressed in a language we knew amongst those Russian-speaking folk.

Then he continued, "If you allow me I will show you our homes. The *Igumen* has put me entirely at your disposal."

He spoke so charmingly and so fluently, we could not refrain from asking him where he had learnt to speak such excellent German.

"My mother is German," he replied, "but my father is Russian, and, therefore, I must belong to the Orthodox Church." Of course, it is a known fact that if the father belongs to the Greek Church all the children must belong to that church, and once Greek always Greek.

He seemed to have a sad look in his eyes as he said this, and we asked if he liked being in the monastery. "Of course. Certainly. It is quite of my own free will."

He laid great emphasis on *my own free will*, but, somehow, there was a ring in his voice that made us feel there was more force than truth in the assertion, and, being urged by curiosity, we led the conversation back to the same theme later in the day.

He took us to the guest's apartment first. We passed under a

large archway, where, bidding us wait a moment, he ran on to a couple of priests, who were sitting like sentinels at either side of a staircase, and, after some parley with them, returned and explained he had arranged for us to have room No. 25.

We discovered subsequently that all the women's rooms were on the first floor, and those of all the men on the second; husbands and wives invariably being separated.

Our guide courteously asked us to follow him, and, accordingly, down a long and somewhat dark corridor we wandered to No. 25. The walls of the gallery were plainly whitewashed, and ornamented only by an occasional small picture of a saint, before which most passers-by paused and crossed themselves.

No. 25 proved to be but a tiny room, a sort of long cupboard, containing three little wooden beds, two chairs, and one stool, which latter served as a wash-hand stand; there was besides a small table in the window, and positively nothing else. It could not have been more sparsely furnished, and it could not have been smaller, for there was only enough space to pass up and down between the beds. It savoured of a ship's cabin, yet it was the honoured guest-chamber of a monastery where hospitality coupled with strict simplicity reigned.

Ere leaving us with the most gracious of bows, our new friend explained he would return anon.

At once we unpacked our small bundle, and arranged our luncheon basket, so that on our return, in an hour's time, after

visiting the gardens, for which our novice had gone to fetch the key, we might have something to eat.

When we re-entered our tiny chamber for that festive meal, we asked Brother Sebastian, who had meantime charmed us by his gracious kindly ways, if he would join us.

He looked sadly and wistfully at the viands, ere he answered, "No, thank you, Gnädige Frau – I must not."

There really seemed no harm in feeding the poor ill-nourished monk, so, spite of the refusal, we begged him out of sheer humanity to change his mind, and have some of our precious chicken.

"I ought not to eat with strangers," he replied. "A little tea and bread, however, I will take, if you please; such small luxuries are allowed in fasting time, but I must not have any sardines or fowl, or cheese, or butter, or milk, thank you," he continued, as we handed each in turn.

It seemed as though we had been reckoning without our host. Where, oh! where, was the much-discussed chicken? Each parcel we opened proved to be something else, and we looked from one to the other amazed. Grandpapa was not there to ask, but Grandpapa had told us the story of his dream, a mere phantasy of crowing chanticleers, and we began to fear he had never ordered that chicken at all.

We were really getting more than anxious when the last parcel – a very small one – lay in its white paper at the bottom of that basket.

Even Brother Sebastian began to share our anxiety and sorrow, as he consolingly told us no meat, fish, or fowl was to be procured for love or money on the Island. Slowly and sadly we undid that little parcel, and lo! happily sitting on the white paper were three small pigeons.

"No chicken, but small pigeons," we exclaimed – "how ridiculous; why, they are so tiny there is nothing on them."

Yet it turned out the creatures were not pigeons but the typical fowls eaten in Finland during the month of July. Almost as soon as the baby chicken has learnt to walk about alone, and long before he is the possessor of real feathers, his owner marks him for slaughter; he is killed and eaten. Very extravagant, but very delicious. A Hamburger fowl or a French poussin is good and tender, but he is nothing to be compared with the succulent Finlander, whose wishing-bone is not one inch long.

Having devoured a whole fowl for my dinner, I brought away the small bone as a memento of a ravenous appetite – unappeased by an entire spring chicken.

Brother Sebastian smiled at the incident, and we tried to persuade him to change his mind and join us; he looked longingly at the modest dainties which seemed to bring back recollections of the days when he lived in the world, and enjoyed the pleasures thereof, but he only said —

"Besten Dank, meine Dame, but my conscience will not let me eat such luxuries. I cannot take more than the Church allows in fast times – the tea and bread is amply sufficient, for this is

white bread, and that is a delicacy I have not tasted for years; all ours is black and sour. I should like to eat a sardine, but my conscience would kill me afterwards, you see."

As we did not wish to kill the unsophisticated youth, we pressed him no further.

What a picture we made, we four, in a far-away chamber of the *Valamo* Monastery with that beautiful boy sitting on the queer coverleted couch.

He told us that three years previously he had "made a fault." We did not ask of what nature, and he did not say; he only stated that his father who was a high official in the Russian Army, had, on the advice of the priest, sent him here to repent.

"Was it not very strange at first?"

"Yes, for you see we live in Moscow, and my father knows every one, and there are many grand people always at our house. It seemed difficult to me because most of the inmates here are peasants, and once within the monastery walls we are all equal; we are all men, and God's servants. Rank counts as nothing, for no one knows our names except the *Igumen* himself. When we enter we give up our garments, our money, our identity, and clothe ourselves as servants of the Church until we leave again, or take the vows of monks and give up the world for ever."

"How do you become monks?" we inquired, interested.

"We cannot do so till we are thirty years of age – we are novices at first, and free to go away, but at thirty we can decide to take the vows, give up all we possess, and dedicate our lives

to the Church, if we desire to do so. Then our name is struck off the police rolls."

"You are lost, in fact?"

"Yes, lost to the world, for although while novices we can get away occasionally for a time on important business, once we become monks it is hardly possible to obtain leave of absence. A monk," he continued proudly, "wears a tall hat, has a room to himself, is waited upon by a probationer, sits at the upper table, and leads a much easier life as regards all kinds of work."

He had spoken such splendid German, this fine young fellow with the sympathetic eyes, through which his very soul shone, that we again complimented him.

"I used to speak some French," he said; "for we had a French governess, as children, and always spoke that language in the nursery; but since I have been here there has been so little occasion to employ it, I have quite forgotten that tongue. Indeed, in four years – for I have stayed some months beyond my time of punishment – I find even my German, which, as I told you, is my mother's language, getting rusty, and I am not sure that I could write it in *Latenischen-Buchstaben* now at all."

"What a pity," we exclaimed, "that you do not read French and German so as to keep your knowledge up to date."

"We are not allowed to read anything that is not in the Cloister Monastery," he replied, "which for the most part only contains theological books, with a few scientific works, and those are written in Russian, Hebrew, Slavonic, and Greek, so I have no

chance, you see."

"Do you mean to say you have no opportunity of keeping up the knowledge you already possess?"

"Not that kind of knowledge. I love botany, but there are no books relating to botany here – so I am forgetting that also. We never read, even the monks seldom do."

"But you have the newspapers," we remarked, horrified to think of a young intellect rotting and mouldering away in such a manner.

"I have not seen a newspaper for nearly four years, never since I came here. We are not allowed such things."

"But you said you were sent here for only three years' punishment – how does it happen you have remained for nearly four?"

"Because I chose to stay on; you see I have lost touch with the world. My parents sent me here against my will, now I stay here against their will, because they have unfitted me by the life I have led here for that from which I came."

We listened appalled.

"Will you tell me some news, kind ladies?" he added, the while a mournful look came into his face, "for, as the *Igumen* said I might take you round to-day and stay with you, I should like to hear something to tell the others to-night."

"What sort of news?" we asked, a lump rising in our throats as we realised the sadness of this young life. Gently born and gently bred, educated as a gentleman, for nearly four years he had

mixed with those beneath him, socially and intellectually, until he had almost reached their level. He lived with those by birth his inferiors, although he kept himself smart and clean and tidy.

"Oh!" he said, "I remember Home Rule was written about when I last saw the papers. Home Rule for Ireland like one has in Finland."

Hardly believing in his total innocence of the outer world, we asked —

"Does no one ever really see a paper in this monastery?"

"The *Igumen* does, I think, no one else; but I did hear, through visitors, that our young Tzarwitch had been made Tzar lately."

Oh! the pity of it all. Talking to this beautiful boy was like speaking to a spirit from another world.

We ransacked our brains as to what would interest an educated young man, whose knowledge of the events that had engrossed his fellows for four whole years was a perfect blank.

"Have you heard of horseless carriages and flying machines?" we asked.

"No. What are they; what do you mean? Don't joke, please, because every true word you say is of value to me, you see," he said, in an almost beseeching tone, with a wistful expression in his eyes.

It was very touching, and we almost wept over his boyish pleasure at our description of modern doings. We told him of everything and anything we could think of, and he sat, poor lad, the while sipping tea without milk or sugar as though it were



nectar, and eating white bread, as if the most tasty of French confections.

"You *are* good to me," he said; "you are kind to tell me," and tears sparkled in his eyes.

"Why, why," in distress we asked him, "do you stay here?"

"It is very nice," he said, but we heard that strange ring again in the voice of that beautiful boy.

"But to live here is selfish and wrong; you live for yourself, you do not teach the ignorant, or heal the sick; you bury yourself away from temptation, so there is no virtue in being good. Ignorance is not virtue, it is knowledge tempered by abstinence that spells victory. You are educated in mind and strong in body; you could do much finer work for your God by going into the world than by staying at *Valamo*. You ought to mix among your fellows, help them in their lives, and show them a good example in your own."

"You think so?" he almost gasped, rising from his seat. "So help me, God! I have been feeling as much myself. I know there is something wrong in this reposeful life; I feel – I feel sometimes – and yet, *I am very happy here*." A statement it was quite impossible to believe.

We spoke to him very earnestly, for there was something deeply touching about the lad, and then he repeated he was free to go if he chose. He explained that when his penance was performed and he was free to leave, some months before, he had become so accustomed to the life, so afraid of the world, that he chose to remain. But that, latterly, doubts began to trouble him,

and now, well, he was glad to hear us talk; it had done him good, for he never, never before talked so much to strangers, and it was perhaps wrong for him to do so now. If such were the case, might Heaven forgive him.

"But come," he finished, as though desirous of changing the subject, "I must show you our refectory."

We had become so entranced by the boy, his doubts and fears, that we rose reluctantly to follow the gaunt youth, whose bodily and mental strength seemed wasting away in that atmosphere of baleful repose.

He showed us the great dining-hall where the wooden tables were laid for supper. There were no cloths; cloths being only used for great feast-days, and the simplicity was greater than a convict prison, and the diet far more strict. Yet these men chose it of their own free will. No wonder our starving classes elect to live in prison at the country's expense during the cold winter months, and to sleep in our public parks during the summer; such a life is far preferable, more free and yet well cared for than that of the Russian monk.

Little brown earthenware soup plates, with delicious pale-green glazed china linings, stood in front of every monk's place. Benches without backs were their seats, and tall wooden boxes their salt-cellar. On each table stood a couple of large pewter soup-tureens filled with small beer; they drink from a sort of pewter soup ladle, which they replace on the edge of the pot after use.

What about germ disease in such a place, O ye bacteriologists? But certainly the average monk looks very ill, even when presumably healthy!

In the olden feudal days in England meals were arranged in precisely the same way, as may be seen to-day in College Halls at the Universities or the London Temple. Here in the Monastery the raised dais at the end was occupied by the *Igumen*, seated on a chair of state; his most important monks were next him, then came the lower grades, and below the wooden salts sat the novices and apprentices.

Three meals a day are served in this hall, a long grace preceding and closing each, and a certain number of the younger men are told off to wait on the others, which they have to do as silently as possible, while portions of the Bible are read out by a monk during each meal from a high desk.

After leaving the dining-room we went over the workshops, where in winter everything of every sort is made; these four hundred and seventy men – if they do not work for the outer world – work for themselves and their island home. They build their churches and other edifices, make the bricks and mortar, their coats and clothes, their boots and shoes, mould their pottery, carve their wooden church ornamentations, shape them in plaster, or beat them in metal. There are goldsmiths and joiners, leather tanners and furriers, amongst them, and during the long dreary frozen winters they all ply these trades. Verily a small body of socialists, each working for the general good of

the little colony.

It is then they make the sacred pictures, the *ikons* for which the monastery is famous, which, together with rosaries and photos, are sold during the summer months to visitors. When these things are disposed of the monks count their profits and make their bills by the aid of coloured balls on a frame, such as children sometimes learn to count with. There are five red balls on one bar, five yellow on another, etc., and by some deft and mysterious movement of these balls the monk, like any ordinary Russian shopkeeper, quickly makes up his bills and presents his account.

"You must come in one of our pilgrim boats to another of our islands," said our friend Sebastian, to which proposal we readily agreed.

What a boat it was! Talk of the old Viking ships that sailed to America or Iceland, and held a couple of hundred persons. The *Valamo* pilgrim's boat did not fall far short in bulk and capacity of those old historic craft. Six oars on each side, and three or four men at each, with plenty of room in the well, or at the stern and bows, for another hundred persons to stow themselves away. We were not pilgrims, and the *Igumen* had kindly ordered a steam launch to tug us. Some fifty or sixty other visitors took advantage of the occasion and accompanied us on our "water party."

It was certainly very beautiful and most unique. Monks in all ages and all countries have ever seemed to pitch upon the most lovely spots of mother earth in which to plant their homes, and our friends at *Valamo* were not behind in this respect.

We were amazed at the beautiful waterways, constantly reminding us of the backwaters in the Thames. On the banks we passed farms; splendid-looking creameries, where all the milk was now being made into butter or cheese for the winter – luxuries denied, as has been said before, to *Valamo* during the fasting season.

We came to a primitive pier, where the trees hung right over the sides, the leaves dipping into the water. It was very secluded, very beautiful, and wonderfully reposeful. Our path lay through a lovely wood, where wild flowers grew in profusion, among them a kind of wild orchid with a delicious perfume, and the small wild arum lily. It is strange that such rare plants should grow there, when one remembers that for six or eight months of the year the land is ice-bound. On the island we visited a small church, within the sacred precincts of which no woman's foot dare tread, but we had a peep at another chapel where a hermit once lived. He never spoke to any one for seven years, and slept nightly in his coffin, in which he was not buried, however, it being necessary to keep the article for visitors to gaze upon.

On our return we much enjoyed a cup of tea in our cloister chamber, where the Russian *samovar* was boiling in readiness. It was not long ere the sonorous monastery bell tolled six, and every one turned towards the church for service, which was to last till about nine o'clock – service of that duration being a daily occurrence. Every one stands the whole of the time. After nine o'clock the monks and novices go to bed, but at three A.M. the

great bell rings and they all have to get up again for another service, which lasts for two or three hours more. Altogether at *Valamo* about five or six hours out of every twenty-four are spent in prayer.

During the winter months every one in the monastery has to be present at both the day and night services, namely, stand or kneel on bare flags in the church for the time just mentioned. In summer the authorities are not so strict, and provided all attend the service every night, and the second one two or three times a week, nothing is said about a couple or so being missed.

Being a monastery church, all the men stood on one side, the women, visitors, and pilgrims on the other, during the service at which we were present. Afterwards, in the Greek Churches in St. Petersburg, we found that the sexes were not divided in this manner.

It was the first time we had participated at a Russian service, and the chief impression left on our minds was the endless movement of the congregation. They were everlastingly crossing themselves, not once, but two or three times running, and every few minutes they all did it again; then about every twelfth person would kneel down, and putting his hands on the floor before him touch the ground with his forehead like the Mohammedans when they pray to the Prophet, and tell their beads as true monks tell theirs. One man we watched go down *forty times running* and cross himself three times between each reverence! A penance, no doubt, but a penance unlikely to do any one much good, at

least so we could not help thinking.

Again, a woman, a poor fat old pilgrim, who got on her knees with the greatest difficulty, remained with her forehead on the ground for at least five minutes, till we really began to wonder if she were dead; but at last she rose after some trouble, for we had to help her up, and we fervently hoped that was the end of her penance, poor old soul. Not a bit of it; a quarter of an hour afterwards she was down again and when we left she was still praying. Then a strange-looking sort of priest came and stood beside us, instead of joining the other men who clustered round the *Igumen's* throne or before the altar. After scrutinising him for some time, surprised at a man standing among the women, we discovered *he* was a *she* come on a pilgrimage to pray. She of strange garb was an abbess!

The reverence in the Greek Church is far more living than it now is in the Church of Rome, though outwardly both are so much alike to the outsider. The Catholic priests cannot marry, while the priests in the Greek Church may do so.

We were getting very tired of standing listening to the monotonous reading of the psalms, watching the priests walking about in their long black robes, taking their hats off and on, and endlessly kneeling or bowing to the great *Igumen* who stood during the whole ceremony on a carved wooden throne covered with scarlet velvet. The singing was very unequal. The choirs came in from both sides of the altar twice, and formed themselves into a half circle on the floor of the church – as choirs

used to do at the representations of the Greek plays of old. We were well-nigh suffocated with incense and the strange odour that emanates from a Russian peasant, and had begun to think of those queer little wooden beds in which we were to pass the night – and what a contrast the primitive cell was to that gorgeous glittering church – when we saw our "beautiful boy" beckoning to us.

We followed him out.

"I have bad news for you," he said; "your boat for to-morrow is to leave to-night – in half an hour."

"Why?" we asked, aghast.

"The other passengers desire to leave to-night and proceed by way of the *Holy Island* back to *Sordavala*; they all wish it, so the captain is going."

"But is there no other boat for us?"

"None to-morrow," he replied.

"But it was arranged to leave to-morrow," we faltered. "We took our tickets on that understanding; we have unpacked here; we are prepared for a night in a monastery, and have given up our rooms at *Sordavala*."

"It is of no avail," he said; "the greatest number carry the day here, and the others all want to go. I have done my best, but it is of no use."

We rushed to our cloister-chamber, bundled our things into a bag, and marched off to the boat, sorry indeed to miss our night in the monastery, and still more sorry to leave that beautiful youth



behind on his island home, an island which rises solitary from one of the deepest parts of the vast *Ladoga* lake – rises like a pyramid over a thousand feet through the water, and yet remains almost hillless on the surface, though covered with dense foliage. As we glided over the perfectly still water, we saw the blue domes of the new church in the sunlight, towering above the woods like the guardian angel of the island.

We had made friends with several of the monks who spoke a little French or German, and who came to see us off and wish us a pleasant journey. They followed our steamer along the banks and waved good-bye again and again, especially Brother Sebastian, who had spent nearly twelve hours in our company during that glorious summer day.

What would become of him, we wondered. Would he waste his life among those men, so few of whom were, socially or intellectually, his equals, or would he return to the world?

Drops of water make the ocean, and grains of sand build up the universe: would he, atom though he was, return to his position in society, lead an honest, noble, virtuous life, and by his influence help his nation?

*Holy Island* was perhaps more beautiful than *Valamo*, and although so near to *Valamo* the natural features were entirely changed. Here the rocks rose straight out of the water for a hundred feet or more, like a perpendicular wall, but lying very much deeper under the sea, as the iceberg does – they were such strange rocks, they looked as if they were sliced down straight

by man's hand, instead of being nature's own work. We landed and walked along a wonderful pathway, hewn out of the side of the solid rock, from which we looked sheer down into the water below; here and there the path was only made of wooden plankings, which joined one rock to another over some yawning chasm below. Suddenly we came upon a cave, a strange wee place about fifteen feet long and four wide, where a holy friar had once lived and prayed, although it was so low he was unable to stand upright. An altar still remains with its ever-burning lamp, but the religious element was rather spoilt, when a couple of monks met us and asked the gentlemen for cigars, though smoking is prohibited by their sect.

On this island the wild arum lilies we had before noticed grew profusely, while the vegetation everywhere was beautiful, and yet eight or ten feet of snow covered the ground all through the long winter. As we left *Holy Island*, it was past ten o'clock at night, and yet what could that be? We were far away from land, and still there seemed to be land quite close to us. What could it mean? It was a mirage. Such a mirage is sometimes seen on the vast *Ladoga* lake as in the plains of Egypt, and vastly beautiful it was. A fitting ending to a strangely beautiful day we thought, as we softly glided over the water.

It was the longest day of the year, and when at eleven P.M. we neared *Sordavala* the sun had not set. Its glorious reflections and warm colourings stirred our hearts' inmost depths, and bathed us in a sweet content as we sat silent and awed, dreaming of the

strangely pathetic story of that beautiful boy.

# CHAPTER V

## SORDAVALA, OR A MUSICAL FESTIVAL

Terror had entered our souls when we read in the *Nya Pressen*, the day before leaving for the musical festival at *Sordavala*, the following: "*Sordavala* has only thirteen hundred inhabitants, and some ten thousand people have arrived for the *Juhla*. They are sleeping on floors and tables, and any one who can get even a share in a bed must be more than satisfied. Food cannot be procured, and general discomfort reigns." This was not cheerful; indeed the prospect seemed terrible, more especially when, after getting up at five o'clock, and driving some miles to *Wiborg*, we arrived at the station only to find the train crammed from end to end, and not a chance of a seat anywhere. Confusion reigned, every one was struggling with every one else for places, and the scrimmage was as great as though it were "a cheap trip to Margate and back" in the height of the season. There were only second and third-class carriages, with a sort of fourth, which was said to hold "forty men or eight horses," and had no windows, but was provided with rough benches and odd boxes for the passengers to sit on. In such a terrible railway carriage all the members of the brass band travelled with their music stands and instruments. We ran from end to end of the platform in despair. It was

the only train of the day, and *full*. Even Frau von Lilly, with all her Swedish and all her Finnish, could not succeed in finding places. At last an official stepped forward, and, touching his hat, remarked —

"There are no seats to be had in any compartment, but, as so many persons desire to go on, we shall probably send a relief train in an hour."

"Are we to wait on the chance of 'probably'?"

"Yes, I think you must. In fact, I am almost sure you must; but in any case you cannot go in that; it is just off."

And sure enough away steamed number one before the stolid Finns could make up their minds to despatch number two; nevertheless, an hour afterwards the relief train was ready and comparatively empty, so we travelled in peace.

All these slow arrangements and avoidances of committal to any announcement of fact, constantly reminded us of Scotland — indeed, it is quite remarkable how closely a Finn and a Highlander resemble each other in appearance, in stolid worth, and dogged deliberation; how they eat porridge or *gröt*, oatcake or *knäckebröd*, and have many other strange little peculiarities of manner and diet in common.

We got under weigh at last, and settled down for a few restful hours in a comfortable Finnish railway carriage. The train, ever dignified and deliberate of pace, had just passed *Jaakkima* in the South-East of Finland, almost due North from Petersburg. The heat was great that June day, and here and there, as the engine

puffed through the pine forests, dense columns of smoke rising from the woods near the railway lines alarmed all who beheld, and warned the neighbouring peasants to dig trenches, which alone could stay the fierce flames, rapidly gathering force, that meant destruction.

At many stations we paused, not necessarily for passengers to alight or ascend, but to stock our engine with fuel. There, stacked high and wide and broad, was the wood cut into pieces about two feet long, intended to feed our locomotive, and a couple of men were always in readiness to throw it into the tender as quickly as possible, compatible with the slowness of the Finn.

The heat in the train was so intense that it made us feel drowsy, but, as we fortunately had the end compartment in the corridor-carriage, we were able to open the door and get a breath of air. A bridge somewhat insecure-looking joined us to the next waggon, and a very amusing scene presented itself. The guard was flirting with a Finnish maid, a typical peasant, with a comely figure, set off by a well-fitting bodice. She had high cheek-bones and a wondrous round moon face; a large, good-tempered mouth filled with beautiful teeth, a good complexion, and weak, thin, straight flaxen hair, combed back from a very high forehead. She wore the usual handkerchief over her head. Had she been dark instead of fair, judging by the width of her face and the lines of her eyes, she might have been a Chinese; but to an English mind she appeared anything but beautiful, although clean and healthy looking. She, like many others of her class, had the neatest hands

and feet imaginable, although the latter were encased in black mohair boots with elastic sides, a very favourite foot-covering in Finland.

All along the line there ran a sort of tumbledown wooden fencing, loosely made, and about four or five feet high, meant to keep back the snow in winter. The very thought of snow was refreshing on that broiling day.

As we gasped with the heat, and pondered over the scrambled meal at *Jaakkima*, we listened to the strangely sad but entrancing singing of a number of peasants in the next waggon, all bound like ourselves for *Sordavala*, although they were really rehearsing for the Festival, while we were drowsily proceeding thither merely as spectators.

How they flirted those two on the bridge outside our carriage. Spite of the hard outlines of her face, and her peculiarly small Finnish eyes, the maiden managed to ogle and smile upon the guard standing with his hands upon the rail; so slender was the support, that it seemed as if he might readily fall off the train and be killed by the wheels below. The flirtation was not only on her side, for presently he took her hand, a fat little round hand, with a golden circle upon one of the fingers, which denoted betrothal or marriage, and pressed it fondly. We could not understand their Finnish speech; but there is a language comprehensible to all, in every clime. That the pair were in love no one could for a moment doubt, and that they heeded nothing of those quaint old Finnish chants, distinctly audible from the opposite carriage, was evident,

for they talked on and on.

We passed *Niva*; here and there the waters of a lake glistened in the sunshine, or a river wound away to the sea, strewn with floating wood, as though its waters were one huge raft.

The singing ceased; save the merry laugh of the Finnish girl, nothing but the click-cluck-click of the wheels was audible. The guard leaned over her, whispered in her ear, then, as if yielding to some sudden impulse, pressed her to his heart; and, still to the accompaniment of that endless click-cluck-click, implanted a kiss on her full round lips. For a moment they stood thus, held in warm embrace, muttering those sweet nothings which to lovers mean all the world.

Suddenly the door behind them opened, and one of the singers, nervous and excited from the long practice of his national airs, came upon the bridge to let the gentle zephyrs cool his heated brow.

All smiles, this sunburnt blonde, whose hair fell in long locks, cut off straight, like the ancient saints in pictures, stood before us – his pink flannel shirt almost matching the colour of his complexion.

In a moment all was changed; his happy smile vanished into a glance of deadly hate, the colour fled from his face, leaving him ashy-pale, fire literally shot from his eyes as he gazed upon his affianced bride; but he did not speak.

His hand violently sought his belt, and in a moment the long blade of one of those Scandinavian *puukko*— knives all peasants



use – gleamed in the sunshine. For an instant he balanced it on high, and then, with a shriek more wild than human, he plunged the blade deep down into his betrothed's white breast.

Like a tiger the guilty guard sprang upon him; madly they fought while the girl lay still and senseless at their feet, a tiny stream of blood trickling from her breast.

Northern rage once roused is uncontrollable; and there, on the bridge of the moving train, those two men struggled for mastery, till – yes, yes – the light railing gave way, and together the hater and the hated fell over the side, and were cut to pieces by the wheels.

What a moment! a groan, a piercing shriek, rent the air!

Then, with a gasp, hot and cold, and wet by turns, I woke to find it was all a dream!

The run to *Sordavala* proved a hot and tedious journey of seven hours, but even dusty railway journeys must come to an end, and we arrived at our destination in Eastern Finland about three o'clock.

The crowd at the country station was horrible, and the clamour for cabs, carts, and the general odds and ends of vehicles in waiting to transfer us to our destination, reminded us much of Ober Ammergau on a smaller scale.

This *Sordavala* festival is really the outcome of an old religious ceremony, just as the Welsh Eisteddfod is a child of Druidical meetings for prayer and song. In ancient days bards sang and prayed, and now both in Finland and in England the

survival is a sort of musical competition.

Our Eisteddfod, encouraged by the landed proprietors of Wales, forms a useful bond between landlord and tenant, employer and employed. It is held yearly, in different towns, and prizes are given for choir singing, for which fifty to a hundred voices will assemble from one village, all the choirs joining together in some of the great choruses. Rewards are also given for knitting, for the best national costumes, for solo singing, violin and harp playing, for original poems in Welsh, and for recitations.

In Finland the competition, strangely enough, also takes place once a year, and dates back to the old *Runo* Singers, who orally handed down the national music from generation to generation. Each time the Festival is, as in Wales, held in a different town, the idea being to raise the tastes of the populace, and to encourage the practice of music among a thoroughly musical people. Clubs or choirs are sent from all corners of Finland to compete; the old national airs – of which there are hundreds, ay thousands – are sung, and that unique native instrument the *Kantele* is played. For hundreds of years these *Runo* Singers have handed on the songs of their forefathers by word of mouth, and have kept their history alive.

It was *Elias Lönnrot* who collected these *Kantele* songs. For years and years he travelled about the country gathering them together by ear and word of mouth, and, having weeded out the repetitions, he edited the famous epical *Kalevala*, and later collected quantities of other lyric ballads from the heathen times,

and published them as *Kanteletar*. Thus much ancient music and verse was revived that had almost been forgotten. But of this we must speak in the next chapter.

That Finland is thoroughly musical may be inferred from the dozens of choirs sent to the *Sordavala* Festival from all parts of the country. The peasant voices, in spite of being but slightly trained, or at all events trained very little, sing together wonderfully. Indeed, it was surprising to find how they could all take their proper parts, and keep to them; but the supreme delight, perhaps, of the Festival was the student corps, composed of fifty men from the University of *Helsingfors*, who sang together most beautifully, the choir being conducted by one of themselves. They had some glorious voices among them, and as they sang the national airs of Finland, marching backwards and forwards to the park, their feet keeping time with their music, the effect of their distant singing in the pine-woods was most enthralling.

Strangely enough, when they went to sing on the public platform raised in the park for the occasion, they wore evening dress and white gloves. Dress-clothes are somewhat of a rarity in Finland, as they are in many other continental countries; but there they stood in a semicircle on the dais, each man with his white velvet student cap in his hand, and, to the spectators, standing a little in the distance, the effect of snowy-white shirt, white gloves, and white cap shown up in the glancing sunbeams by black clothes, was somewhat funny.

The performers met with tremendous applause, and certainly deserved it. Although German students often sing beautifully, and are indeed famous for their rendering of the *Volkslieder*, those from *Helsingfors* sang as well if not better.

We often dined at the same hotel where they lodged, during the week, and when they marched in they sang a grace. After they had finished their dinner, they generally, before leaving, sang two or three songs by special request of visitors dining at the various tables.

Morning, noon, and night those students sang! Small bands of them went to meet the trains coming in, if they expected friends, and stood upon the platform lustily singing their welcome. They went to see other friends off, and, amidst much doffing of caps, they sang farewell songs. They marched in torchlight processions – although the torches were not very successful when all was daylight – and everywhere they went they met with the greatest enthusiasm.

Modern singing at the Festival, in parts and glees, was very good, showing the great musical talent of the people, while especially delightful were the out-of-door concerts. Another charm of the Festival consisted in the exhibition of peasants' work.

As we entered the museum where we were to hear the *Kantele* Concert, we stood transfixed. At a bare wooden table a quite, quite old man with long-flowing locks was sitting with his elbows on the boards, his hands stretched over his *Kantele*, which he was

playing delightfully.

The small flat musical instrument reminded one of the zither of Tyrol, while the strange airs bore some similarity to the bagpipe music of Scotland, at least in time, which, like the piper, the old man beat with his foot. His blue eyes were fixed on the wall opposite, with a strange, weird, far-off look, and never for one moment did he relax his gaze. He seemed absolutely absorbed by his music, and as the queer old figure – a sort of Moses with his long beard – played his native instrument, amid the quaint trappings of the museum for background, we felt enthralled by the sombre surroundings and curious apparition, who might have been *Wäinämöinen* himself, the mythological god of music in Finland.

Others followed; they all played charmingly, and their usually sombre faces seemed quite changed by the sounds of music. Music has always played an important part in the history of Finland – for good be it owned, and not, as Tolstoi suggested, to arouse the vilest passions.

Look at the faces of the people dowered with such legends. The *Runo* Singers live in another world from ours. Theirs is the land of poetry and romance; theirs the careless, happy dream of life. The things of this world, the sordid littleness, the petty struggles, the very fight for bread, they wot not of, for they are content with little. Socialism and Syndicalism have not robbed them of life's joys.

They sit and sing, and dream. See the far-away look on yon

man's features; see how intensely he gazes on some vision painted visibly for him on the blank wall. His very face and mind seem transported to other realms. As the song rises and falls his expression alters, and when he strikes those stirring chords on the *Kantele*

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