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INTO ENGLISH

BY

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TO

DR. J. D. BUCK,

AN ENCOURAGING AND UNSELFISH FRIEND,

AND TO

HIS AFFECTIONATE FAMILY,

THESE PAGES

ARE GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

THE following translation was undertaken from a desire to lay before the English-speaking people the full treasury of epical beauty, folk-lore, and mythology comprised in *The Kalevala*, the national epic of the Finns. A brief description of this peculiar people, and of their ethical, linguistic, social, and religious life, seems to be called for here in order that the following poem may be the better understood.

Finland (Finnish, *Suomi* or *Suomenmaa*, the swampy region, of which Finland, or Fen-land is said to be a Swedish translation,) is at present a Grand-Duchy in the north-western part of the Russian empire, bordering on Olenetz, Archangel, Sweden, Norway, and the Baltic Sea, its area being more than 144,000 square miles, and inhabited by some 2,000,000 of people, the last remnants of a race driven back from the East, at a very early day, by advancing tribes. The Finlanders live in a land of marshes and mountains, lakes and rivers, seas, gulfs, islands, and inlets, and they call themselves *Suomilainen*, Fen-dwellers. The climate is more severe than that of Sweden. The mean yearly temperature in the north is about 27° F., and about 38° F., at Helsingfors,

the capital of Finland. In the southern districts the winter is seven months long, and in the northern provinces the sun disappears entirely during the months of December and January.

The inhabitants are strong and hardy, with bright, intelligent faces, high cheek-bones, yellow hair in early life, and with brown hair in mature age. With regard to their social habits, morals, and manners, all travellers are unanimous in speaking well of them. Their temper is universally mild; they are slow to anger, and when angry they keep silence. They are happy-hearted, affectionate to one another, and honorable and honest in their dealings with strangers. They are a cleanly people, being much given to the use of vapor-baths. This trait is a conspicuous note of their character from their earliest history to the present day. Often in the runes of *The Kalevala* reference is made to the "cleansing and healing virtues of the vapors of the heated bath-room."

The skull of the Finn belongs to the brachycephalic (short-headed) class of Retzius. Indeed the Finn-organization has generally been regarded as Mongol, though Mongol of a modified type. His color is swarthy, and his eyes are gray. He is not inhospitable, but not over-easy of access; nor is he a friend of new fashions. Steady, careful, laborious, he is valuable in the

mine, valuable in the field, valuable on shipboard, and, withal, a brave soldier on land.

The Finns are a very ancient people. It is claimed, too, that they began earlier than any other European nation to collect and preserve their ancient folk-lore. Tacitus, writing in the very beginning of the second century of the Christian era, mentions the *Fenni*, as he calls them, in the 46th chapter of his *De Moribus Germanorum*. He says of them: "The Finns are extremely wild, and live in abject poverty. They have no arms, no horses, no dwellings; they live on herbs, they clothe themselves in skins, and they sleep on the ground. Their only resources are their arrows, which for the lack of iron are tipped with bone." Strabo and the great geographer, Ptolemy, also mention this curious people. There is evidence that at one time they were spread over large portions of Europe and western Asia.

Perhaps it should be stated here that the copper, so often mentioned in *The Kalevala*, when taken literally, was probably *bronze*, or "hardened copper," the amount and quality of the alloy used being not now known. The prehistoric races of Europe were acquainted with bronze implements.

It may be interesting to note in this connection that Canon Isaac Taylor, and Professor Sayce have but very recently awakened great interest in this question, in Europe especially, by the reading of papers before the British Philological

Association, in which they argue in favor of the Finnic origin of the Aryans. For this new theory these scholars present exceedingly strong evidence, and they conclude that the time of the separation of the Aryan from the Finnic stock must have been more than five thousand years ago.

The Finnish nation has one of the most sonorous and flexible of languages. Of the cultivated tongues of Europe, the Magyar, or Hungarian, bears the most positive signs of a deep-rooted similarity to the Finnish. Both belong to the Ugrian stock of agglutinative languages, *i.e.*, those which preserve the root most carefully, and effect all changes of grammar by suffixes attached to the original stem. Grimm has shown that both Gothic and Icelandic present traces of Finnish influence.

The musical element of a language, the vowels, are well developed in Finnish, and their due sequence is subject to strict rules of euphony. The dotted *ö* (equivalent to the French *eu*) of the first syllable must be followed by an *e* or an *i*. The Finnish, like all Ugrian tongues, admits rhyme, but with reluctance, and prefers alliteration. Their alphabet consists of but nineteen letters, and of these, *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *g*, are found only in a few foreign words, and many others are never found initial.

One of the characteristic features of this language, and one that is likewise characteristic of the Magyar, Turkish, Mordvin, and other kindred tongues, consists in the frequent use of endearing diminutives. By a series of suffixes to the names of human beings, birds, fishes, trees, plants, stones, metals, and even actions, events, and feelings, diminutives are obtained, which by their forms present the names so made in different colors; they become more naïve, more childlike, eventually more roguish, or humorous, or pungent. These traits can scarcely be rendered in English; for, as Robert Ferguson remarks: "The English language is not strong in diminutives, and therefore it lacks some of the most effective means for the expression of affectionate, tender, and familiar relations." In this respect all translations from the Finnish into English necessarily must fall short of the original. The same might be said of the many emotional interjections in which the Finnish, in common with all Ugrian dialects, abounds. With the exception of these two characteristics of the Ugrian languages, the chief beauties of the Finnish verse admit of an apt rendering into English. The structure of the sentences is very simple indeed, and adverbs and adjectives are used sparingly.

Finnish is the language of a people who live pre-eminently close to nature, and are at home

amongst the animals of the wilderness, beasts and birds, winds, and woods, and waters, falling snows, and flying sands, and rolling rocks, and these are carefully distinguished by corresponding verbs of ever-changing acoustic import. Conscious of the fact that, in a people like the Finns where nature and nature-worship form the centre of all their life, every word connected with the powers and elements of nature must be given its full value, great care has been taken in rendering these finely shaded verbs. A glance at the mythology of this interesting people will place the import of this remark in better view.

In the earliest age of Suomi, it appears that the people worshiped the conspicuous objects in nature under their respective, sensible forms. All beings were persons. The Sun, Moon, Stars, the Earth, the Air, and the Sea, were to the ancient Finns, living, self-conscious beings. Gradually the existence of invisible agencies and energies was recognized, and these were attributed to superior persons who lived independent of these visible entities, but at the same time were connected with them. The basic idea in Finnish mythology seems to lie in this: that all objects in nature are governed by invisible deities, termed *haltiat*, regents or genii. These *haltiat*, like members of the human family, have distinctive bodies and spirits; but the minor ones are some-

what immaterial and formless, and their existences are entirely independent of the objects in which they are particularly interested. They are all immortal, but they rank according to the relative importance of their respective charges. The lower grades of the Finnish gods are sometimes subservient to the deities of greater powers, especially to those who rule respectively the air, the water, the field, and the forest. Thus, Pilajatar, the daughter of the aspen, although as divine as Tapio, the god of the woodlands, is necessarily his servant.

One of the most notable characteristics of the Finnish mythology is the interdependence among the gods. "Every deity", says Castrén, "however petty he may be, rules in his own sphere as a substantial, independent power, or, to speak in the spirit of *The Kalevala*, as a self-ruling householder. The god of the Polar-star only governs an insignificant spot in the vault of the sky, but on this spot he knows no master."

The Finnish deities, like the ancient gods of Italy and Greece, are generally represented in pairs, and all the gods are probably wedded. They have their individual abodes and are surrounded by their respective families. The primary object of worship among the early Finns was most probably the visible sky with its sun, moon, and stars, its aurora-lights, its thunders

and its lightnings. The heavens themselves were thought divine. Then a personal deity of the heavens, coupled with the name of his abode, was the next conception; finally this sky-god was chosen to represent the supreme Ruler. To the sky, the sky-god, and the supreme God, the term *Jumala* (thunder-home) was given.

In course of time, however, when the Finns came to have more purified ideas about religion, they called the sky *Taivas* and the sky-god *Ukko*. The word, Ukko, seems related to the Magyar *Agg*, old, and meant, therefore, an old being, a grandfather; but ultimately it came to be used exclusively as the name of the highest of the Finnish deities. Frost, snow, hail, ice, wind and rain, sunshine and shadow, are thought to come from the hands of Ukko. He controls the clouds; he is called in *The Kalevala*, "The Leader of the Clouds," "The Shepherd of the Lamb-Clouds," "The God of the Breezes," "The Golden King," "The Silvern Ruler of the Air," and "The Father of the Heavens." He wields the thunder-bolts, striking down the spirits of evil on the mountains, and is therefore termed, "The Thunderer," like the Greek Zeus, and his abode is called, "The Thunder-Home." Ukko is often represented as sitting upon a cloud in the vault of the sky, and bearing on his shoulders the firmament, and therefore he is termed, "The

Pivot of the Heavens." He is armed as an omnipotent warrior; his fiery arrows are forged from copper, the lightning is his sword, and the rainbow his bow, still called *Ukkon Kaari.* Like the German god, Thor, Ukko swings a hammer; and, finally, we find, in a vein of familiar symbolism, that his skirt sparkles with fire, that his stockings are blue, and his shoes, crimson-colored.

In the following runes, Ukko here and there interposes. Thus, when the Sun and Moon were stolen from the heavens, and hidden away in a cave of the copper-bearing mountain, by the wicked hostess of the dismal Sariola, he, like Atlas in the mythology of Greece, relinquishes the support of the heavens, thunders along the borders of the darkened clouds, and strikes fire from his sword to kindle a new sun and a new moon. Again, when Lemminkainen is hunting the fire-breathing horse of Piru, Ukko, invoked by the reckless hero, checks the speed of the mighty courser by opening the windows of heaven, and showering upon him flakes of snow, balls of ice, and hailstones of iron. Usually, however, Ukko prefers to encourage a spirit of independence among his worshipers. Often we find him, in the runes, refusing to heed the call of his people for help, as when Ilmatar, the daughter of the air, vainly invoked him to her

aid, that Wainamoinen, already seven hundred years unborn, might be delivered. So also Wainamoinen beseeches Ukko in vain to check the crimson streamlet flowing from his knee wounded by an axe in the hands of Hisi. Ukko, however, with all his power, is by no means superior to the Sun, Moon, and other bodies dwelling in the heavens; they are uninfluenced by him, and are considered deities in their own right. Thus, Pæivæ means both sun and sun-god; Kun means moon and moon-god; and Tæhti and Ottava designate the Polar-star and the Great Bear respectively, as well as the deities of these bodies.

The Sun and the Moon have each a consort, and sons, and daughters. Two sons only of Pæivæ appear in *The Kalevala*, one comes to aid Wainamoinen in his efforts to destroy the mystic Fire-fish, by throwing from the heavens to the girdle of the hero, a "magic knife, silver-edged, and golden-handled;" the other son, Panu, the Fire-child, beings back to Kalevala the fire that had been stolen by Louhi, the wicked hostess of Pohyola. From this myth Castrén argues that the ancient Finns regarded fire as a direct emanation from the Sun. The daughters of the Sun, Moon, Great Bear, Polar-star, and of the other heavenly dignitaries, are represented as ever-young and beautiful maidens, sometimes seated on

the bending branches of the forest-trees, sometimes on the crimson rims of the clouds, sometimes on the rainbow, sometimes on the dome of heaven. These daughters are believed to be skilled to perfection in the arts of spinning and weaving, accomplishments probably attributed to them from the fanciful likeness of the rays of light to the warp of the weaver's web.

The Sun's career of usefulness and beneficence in bringing light and life to Northland is seldom varied. Occasionally he steps from his accustomed path to give important information to his suffering worshipers. For example, when the Star and the Moon refuse the information, the Sun tells the Virgin Mariatta, where her "golden infant lies hidden."

> "Yonder is thy golden infant,
> There thy holy babe lies sleeping,
> Hidden to his belt in water,
> Hidden in the reeds and rushes."

Again when the devoted mother of the reckless hero, Lemminkainen, (chopped to pieces by the sons of Mana, as in the myth of Osiris) was raking together the fragments of his body from the river of Tuoni, and fearing that the sprites of the Death-stream might resent her intrusion, the Sun, in answer to her entreaties, throws his powerful rays upon the dreaded Shades, and sinks them into a deep sleep, while the mother

gathers up the fragments of her son's body in safety. This rune of the Kalevala is particularly interesting as showing the belief that the dead can be restored to life through the blissful light of heaven.

Among the other deities of the air are the *Luonnotars*, mystic maidens, three of whom were created by the rubbing of Ukko's hands upon his left knee. They forthwith walk the crimson borders of the clouds, and one sprinkles white milk, one sprinkles red milk, and the third sprinkles black milk over the hills and mountains; thus they become the "mothers of iron," as related in the ninth rune of *The Kalevala.* In the highest regions of the heavens, Untar, or Undutar, has her abode, and presides over mists and fogs. These she passes through a silver sieve before sending them to the earth. There are also goddesses of the winds, one especially noteworthy, Suvetar (*suve*, south, summer), the goddess of the south-wind. She is represented as a kind-hearted deity, healing her sick and afflicted followers with honey, which she lets drop from the clouds, and she also keeps watch over the herds grazing in the fields and forests.

Second only to air, water is the element held most in reverence by the Finns and their kindred tribes. "It could hardly be otherwise," says Castrén, "for as soon as the soul of the savage