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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS



FINLAND



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A KARELIAN RUNO SINGER.

Allan Stewart.

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PEEPS AT MANY LANDS

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FINLAND

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BY

M. PEARSON THOMSON

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WITH TWELVE FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
IN COLOUR

BY

ALLAN STEWART, ALEXANDER
FEDERLEY, VERNON STOKES,
AND ALAN WRIGHT

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

6

1909

7

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TO
MY FRIEND
M. C. H.
IN MEMORY OF OUR
HAPPY WANDERINGS IN FINLAND

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. A PEEP AT ITS HISTORY	I
II. THE LAND OF A THOUSAND LAKES (I.)	6
III. THE LAND OF A THOUSAND LAKES (II.)	12
IV. CHARACTERISTICS AND CUSTOMS	19
V. FOLK-LORE AND LEGENDS	25
VI. THE LAPPS AND THEIR WAYS	32
VII. IMATRA—RAPIDS—WATERFALLS	39
VIII. FARM AND PASTORAL LIFE	47
IX. RELIGION—MUSIC—ART	53
X. TOWNS AND VILLAGES	60
XI. SCHOOL AND HOLIDAY TIME IN STRAWBERRY- LAND	68
XII. SPORTS AND PASTIMES	75
XIII. THE PEOPLE'S EMPLOYMENTS	82

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	ARTIST.	
A KARELIAN RUNO SINGER	<i>Allan Stewart</i>	<i>Frontispiece</i>
ABO CATHEDRAL AND MARKET		FACING PAGE
BOATS	<i>A. Federley</i>	viii
SAIMA CANAL	„	9
FLOATING TIMBER	„	16
COUNTRY DANCE	<i>Allan Stewart</i>	25
A LAPP READY FOR A PULKA RIDE	<i>Vernon Stokes and</i> <i>Alan Wright</i>	32
RAPIDS IN THE ULEA RIVER	<i>A. Federley</i>	41
“ <i>SVEDJE</i> ,” BURNING THE FOREST	<i>Allan Stewart</i>	48
GIRLS ON THE WAY TO CHURCH	„	57
HELSINGFORS	<i>A. Federley</i>	64
CHILDREN ON SKIS	<i>Allan Stewart</i>	73
SKI JUMPING	„	80

Sketch-Map of Finland on page viii



SKETCH-MAP OF FINLAND



A. Febrley.

ABO CATHEDRAL AND MARKET BOATS.

FINLAND

CHAPTER I

A PEEP AT ITS HISTORY

I AM sure you think Finland a small, out-of-the-way place, inaccessible in summer and impossible in winter to any but the Laplander or Esquimaux! Nothing of the kind. It is true that its waters are ice-bound in the winter, but a passage is kept open by ice-breaking steamers between England and the Finnish ports of Åbo and Hangö; you can therefore reach this beautiful land at any time of the year.

If you would enjoy a unique experience, you must go there in the winter, and steam through the crashing thunder of breaking ice to reach the "Land of Heroes," as Finland is called by its people. In summer it is a land of midnight sun—warm, even hot, days, beautiful woodland and forest scenery, exquisite sunsets, sunny lakes, cool, shaded streams, and every modern means of travel. Its numerous attractions of scenery and sport draw

Finland

many Englishmen and others to its shores every summer, also in winter for its amusing skating, sleighing, ski-ing (snow-shoeing), and all kinds of winter games. Finland is called "Suomi" in Finnish, which means "marsh-land," and because of its numberless waters it is also called "The Land of a Thousand Lakes," although there are actually many more than that.

Few countries possess so many attractive names as Finland does. The children call it "Strawberry Land," because of its bountiful supply of this fruit; others, again, call it "The Land of a Thousand Isles," on account of the multitude of fir-clad islands scattered throughout its waters. I like the title of "Land of Heroes" best, and you will agree with me when I tell you about the Finns' brave struggle to keep their country (and language), although it is a border State between two greater Powers. Finland lies on the north-east shores of the Baltic Sea. It is bounded by the Gulf of Bothnia, the Gulf of Finland, and on the land side its boundaries are Russia, Norway and Sweden, as you will see by your map.

"It is water I want, not land," said a Czar; so you may suppose what the people of Finland suffered between Sweden and Russia before the latter got possession of the Finnish ports. Little is known of the history of Finland or its people

A Peep at its History

before the twelfth century, when King Eric of Sweden invaded the land with the avowed object of Christianizing the people. He was accompanied by Archbishop Henry, an Englishman, who converted and baptized the Finns at Åbo, the capital at that time.

Many Swedes followed their King, and settled on the South Coast of Finland as well as on the islands near its borders. Grants of land were given to many Swedish nobles by the King, to encourage settlement in this newly acquired territory. The Finns benefited largely by the Swedish laws and by contact with a more cultured nation, whose language they soon learned. Finland thus became a province of Sweden, who was able to keep her for six centuries against Russian invasion. These six centuries, however, were anything but peaceful ones for either Swede or Finn, for Russia was determined to get the mastery of the Baltic Sea and Finland's good shipping ports. So war soon broke out between Russia and Sweden, and the fighting continued, with intervals, for many long years. These were years of suffering and famine for the poor Finns. Fire and sword wrought destruction on this beautiful border country, the Finns being wellnigh crushed between the two Powers and their constant warfare.

Russia finally annexed Finland in 1808, by crossing

Finland

the frontier (while Sweden was engaged in the wars with Napoleon), on the pretext that the ports had not been closed against possible invaders.

The Finns were now left to defend themselves against Russia, Sweden being unable then to send reinforcements. However, they bravely held their own for some time, and the story of their skirmishing warfare on the various islands and lakes makes thrilling reading for boys. Alexander I., who was then Czar, did not wait for the end of this war, but proceeded to treat with the Finns, promising them independence for their country by a union with Russia. This the Finns, after a long struggle, finally agreed to, realizing the impossibility of retaining their independence under Sweden, when Russia, the stronger Power, was for ever waging war upon the land. In this they did the best possible for their country, Finland having prospered under Russia, owing to the cessation of wars. In 1809 the Finlanders took the oath of allegiance to Alexander I., and he became Grand Duke of Finland, Sweden ceding to Russia all her rights. By this Act of Union Finland's liberties as an independent State were guaranteed, special privileges being granted to the people which are much valued by them. The Finns are a very law-abiding, peace-loving nation, patriotic before all else, and very tenacious of their liberties.

A Peep at its History

You must understand that the Finnish nation is composed chiefly of two races. The Svekoman is the descendant of the old Swedish settlers, while the Finoman is the true Finn and the original inhabitant of the land. These two races unite in calling themselves Finns, and combine to uphold their country's liberties and its language. Finnish is now the recognized official language; but formerly, when Finland was a province of Sweden, the prevailing language was Swedish, Finnish being very little spoken.

The determination of the Finns to maintain their country as an independent State, having its laws respected by Russia, has not succeeded without an occasional struggle. Although they are the Czar's most loyal subjects, there exists still constant friction between the Finns and the Russian officials placed over them, as the latter frequently ignore the Finnish laws.

Alexander II. was the monarch who did most for Finland, and always respected its laws. This Czar habitually visited the Grand Duchy in his yacht, the arrival of which was always hailed with delight by the loyal, warm-hearted Finns. As soon as the Imperial yacht anchored, small boats of every description might be seen skimming over the water, carrying peasants with offerings of flowers and fruit for their beloved Grand Duke.

Finland

Although Finland is a little larger than Great Britain and Ireland combined, it possesses now neither army nor navy of its own ! The Finns, however, pay a large sum annually to Russia for home defence. It was a terrible calamity to Finland when its army was disbanded by the Czar. This punishment was in consequence of their refusing to serve in Russian regiments, or to be officered by Russians, as doing so would be breaking Finnish law. To be obliged to serve their country in a civil capacity only must be galling to these gallant soldiers of Finland, who, I am sure, will have the sympathy of every freedom-loving Briton.

CHAPTER II

THE LAND OF A THOUSAND LAKES

I

How delightful this title sounds on a hot summer day, when a sail on the bosom of these wondrous blue waters, enjoying the sweet-scented, pine-laden air, seems the most inviting thing to do in the world ! You might sail for days and weeks, always finding something fresh to amuse and attract you on these