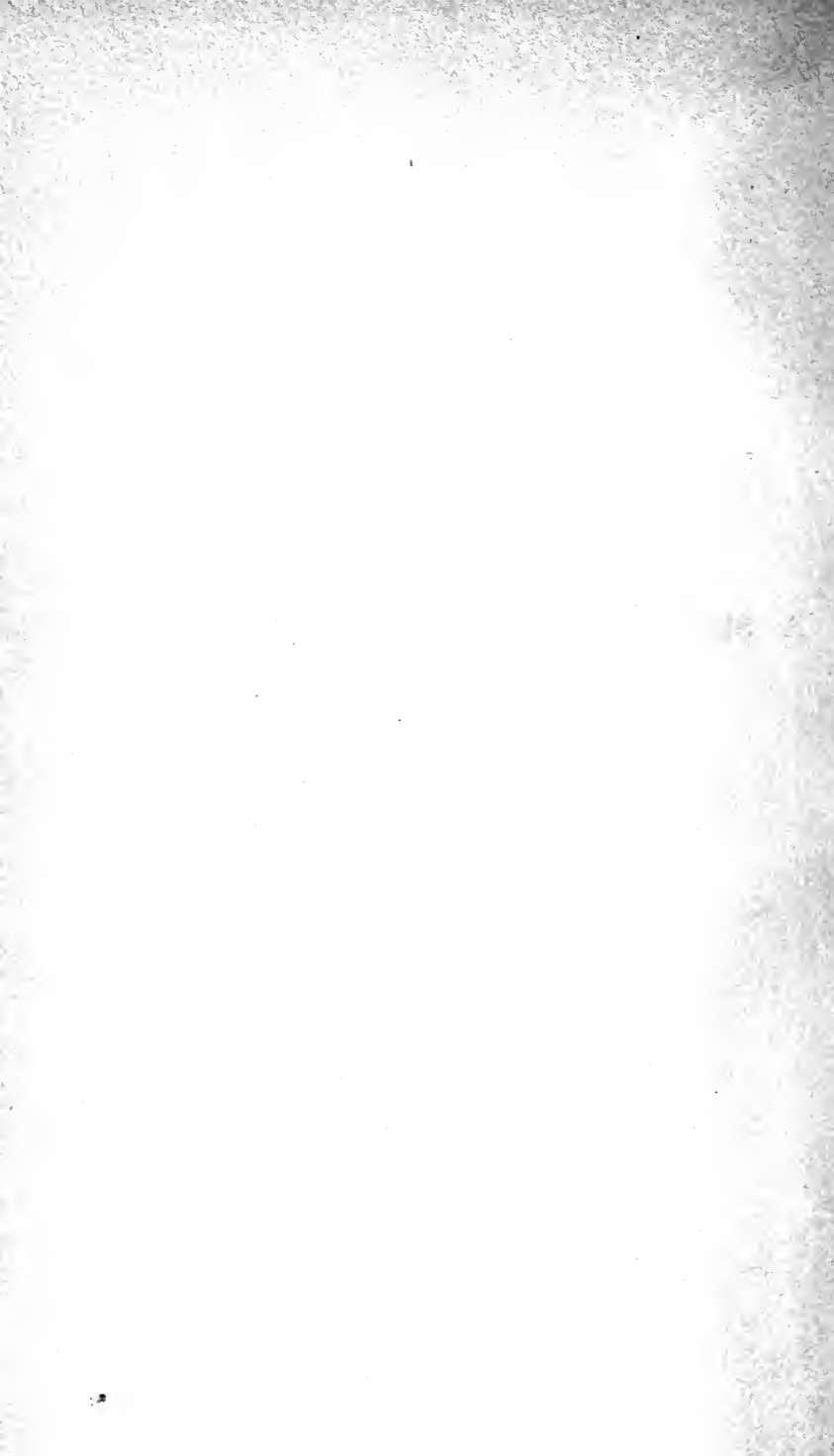


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A SUMMER TOUR IN FINLAND



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HELSINGFORS

A SUMMER TOUR IN FINLAND

BY

PAUL WAINEMAN

AUTHOR OF

"BY A FINNISH LAKE," "THE BAY OF LILACS," ETC.

WITH SIXTEEN ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR BY
ALEXANDER FEDERLEY
AND SIXTEEN OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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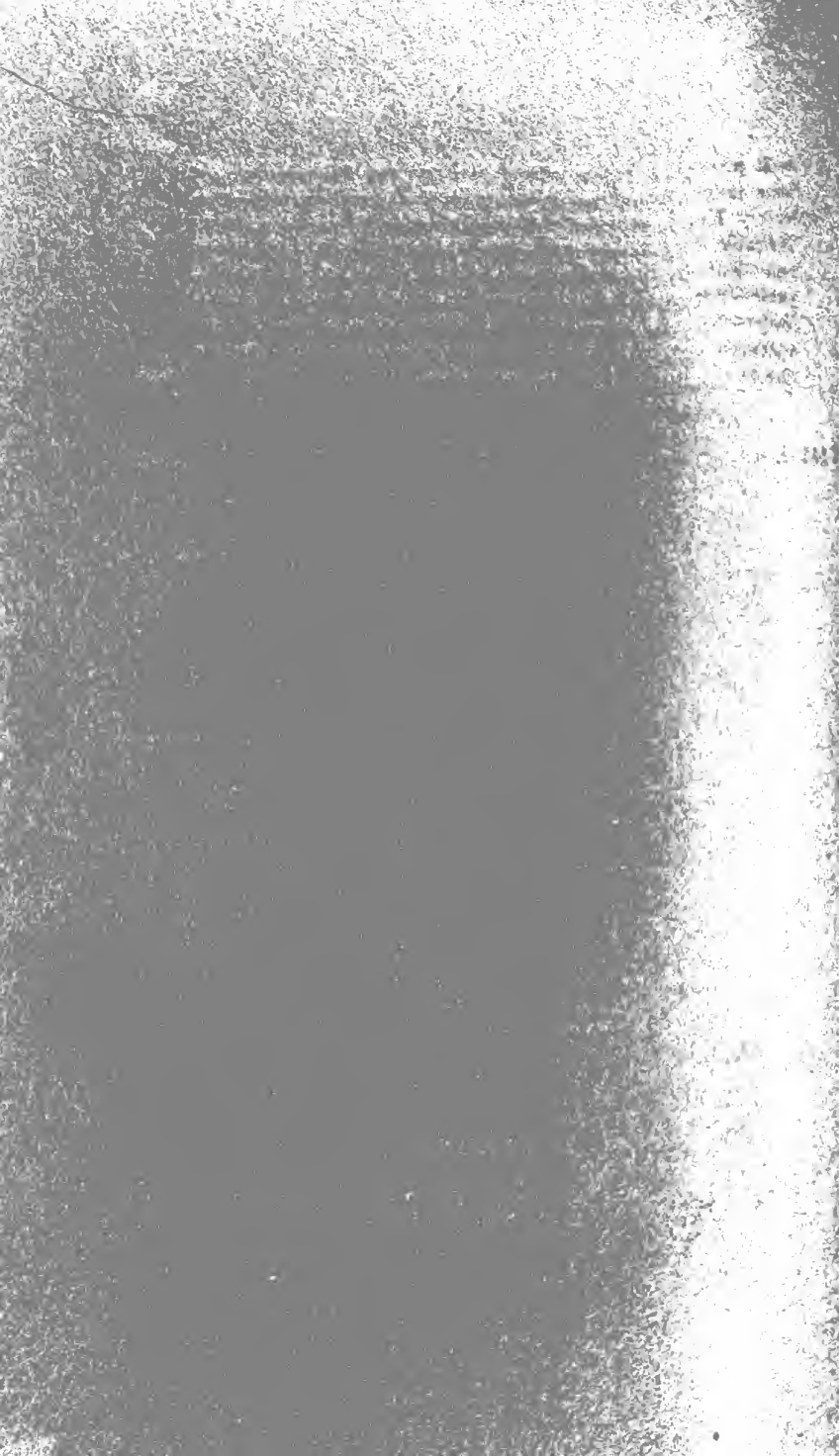
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A SUMMER TOUR IN FINLAND

CHAPTER I

To Helsingfors by water—First glimpse of the capital—The bustle of the harbour—Sveaborg—Cleanliness of the city—A lady member of Parliament—Security of travelling—Music-loving population—Decline of social gaieties—A favourite restaurant—A peep into the past—The soldiers of Finland—A seabound park—A forgotten romance.

THE world is always a delight when the sun is shining upon the waters and we have an extra little thump of pleasure in those variable machines we call our hearts. I defy any one to feel sulky on entering for the first time the harbour of Helsingfors. I have entered it many times, and yet each time it has appeared under a new aspect. To begin with, it comes as a surprise to the traveller. The town is invisible until you have steamed through that wonderful cleft, cut by Nature between two walls of bare granite, that forms the only entrance and exit to the most superbly guarded harbour in the world. It is named with truth the Key of the North. The extent of that inner basin is so immense that the combined fleets of the world could easily find anchorage there, and yet they would all have to steam one by one

through the narrow cleft. So narrow it is, that incoming and outgoing craft have to wait their turn, as two vessels cannot pass through at the same time. The outer boundaries are formed of a series of enormous rocky islands upon which the well-known fortress of Sveaborg is built.

The fortress was originally erected in 1749, for the Swedish Crown, by the Field Marshal Count Augustin Ehrensvärd, who is buried upon the principal island. It is said that sometimes when the storm clouds hang low, and the great waves dash with impotent fury upon those impregnable rocks, the figure of the Field Marshal is seen leaning over the ramparts and looking out towards the sea—the sea that beats with the same wild strength as did once his tempestuous heart, now lying in a lonely grave within sound of the storm that unfurls an alien flag above his head:—a flag planted there after his death by the foe of all mankind—treachery. A son of Finland shamed the heart of the mother who bore him, and stealthily opened the door of his country to an enemy. That morning, close upon a hundred years ago, the spray of the waves that beat against those granite walls were the tears of all the mothers of Finland weeping for the loss of that which they held dearer than the lives of their sons—the honour of their country.

Of late years it has been difficult for strangers to obtain permission to visit the fortress; therefore, the best idea of Sveaborg is nowadays obtained from a passing steamer. It appears to be bristling with guns, and certainly possesses a most formidable exterior. I remember one winter as a child driving to the fortress across the ice which brings the Key

of the North uncomfortably close to the city. In those days the guns alarmed no one, and I played hide-and-seek behind the mounds of piled-up cannon balls that seemed to me to have been placed there on purpose to give me pleasure. I imagine, however, that children of the present day look upon them in a different light: always remembering that two years ago those cannon were not playmates but grim earnest enemies which, for the space of forty-eight hours, pointed their black muzzles upon the homes of the peaceful citizens of Helsingfors.

As our steamer crept slowly past the fortress gun practice was going on, and salvo upon salvo echoed and re-echoed from rock to rock. A young Finnish girl who had been standing close to me turned sharply aside and murmured—

“Oh, how I hate those guns!”

“They are quite harmless,” I said reassuringly.

“Yes—now!” she replied quickly.

A friend came up and interrupted our conversation, but I understood her meaning well.

The outline upon the shore was every moment becoming more distinct, and soon one could distinguish the gaily coloured summer dresses of the ladies who waved their sunshades and handkerchiefs towards the incoming steamer. They looked like a bright bank of flowers against the old-fashioned black-painted pack-houses that lined the quay. In Finland every traveller expects to be greeted by as great a number of relations and friends as he or she can muster, and therefore the arrival of a steamer from any distance is always a sure way of getting together an assembly of people. My little blue-eyed girl had evidently

forgotten her scare about the guns, and was nodding and smiling from right to left as if every one on shore was more or less an acquaintance.

Helsingfors is a city that grows apace. It was only two years since I had last visited it, and yet I could easily discern new buildings. During the last ten years the town has nearly doubled in size. Quite a new quarter has risen below the Russian Cathedral which still dominates the harbour and compels the eye to fall upon the gilded cupolas, scarlet walls, and white roofs, that rise from a hill at the extreme right of the town. No church in Europe could have a better site. Those golden cupolas are seen from every point of vantage. To strangers their brilliance is astonishing. The secret of their wonderful glittering is that they are overlaid with real gold, the one metal that will never tarnish. There is a pretty tale told about the origin of those white roofs. A Russian Empress who visited Helsingfors during the winter season, remarking the charming effect of the snow-laden roofs of the cathedral, asked the authorities to have them painted white in future, so that in all seasons she would be reminded of the snow.

The new houses that have sprung up below the cathedral and towards the inner harbour are mostly built in the modern style, with gaily coloured brick roofs, mediæval grey stone walls, and windows and doors built apparently on purpose to exclude as much as possible both of sun and air. The rents of these gloomy houses, which are much sought after by the fashionable world of Helsingfors, are also the highest in the city.

I observed that the sleepiness of summer had

invaded the town. A tourist can no more judge of the social life of Helsingfors in July than a stranger could of London, arriving there for the first time in August. Yet the Helsingfors of July is a most delightful place for a visit of a few days. Almost the first thing that strikes the stranger is the cleanliness and order of the city. All the open squares are continually sluiced with water, which is as freely used as in Holland. The public parks and gardens are such models of tidiness that a stray leaf on a pathway is considered an eyesore. All the paths are scrupulously brushed every morning by a regiment of bare-footed women, armed with immense brooms formed of freshly gathered birch leaves. Women, by the way, are employed at this work all over the Grand Duchy.

In fact, a mere man may well pause and wonder for what purpose he was created in Finland. Women are engaged in seemingly every branch of work, with the result that meetings of "suffragettes" and women demanding their rights are unknown in a country where women are students in the University, clerks in the banks, in the post-offices, and in business houses, and where women not only have their vote, but can be elected members of the Diet. Yet with it all they are not in the least overbearing; indeed, for the greater part, they are exceedingly modest and womanlike. As I landed, one of the recently elected women members of the coming Diet was pointed out to me in the crowd. She was well-dressed and young-looking, with keen, deep-set eyes and a pleasant smile, and in no way resembled the grotesque caricatures of the women members of the Finnish Diet in some English journals.

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However, even the excitement of seeing a real live "lady member" could not prevent my astonishment at the easy rules that now held sway in a country where two years before the passage of these well-guarded portals was hedged about by scores of formalities. Now, apparently, the doors of Finland stood wide open for any one who desired to enter. Wonderful to relate, not even my passport was asked for, and during my whole trip in Finland it never left the corner of my pocket-book where it had been deposited on my departure from England.

I can honestly say that the most timid lady traveller could with the fullest confidence essay a tour in Finland should the present millennium continue. A tour round the Isle of Wight would not be fraught with less peril. Yet I believe the greater part of the globe-trotting population of the world is deterred, not so much by the distance of Finland, as by the thought that they may there be pursued by secret police, or come in for the tail-end of a bomb intended for some one else!—both things to be avoided. They most certainly formed no part of my summer experience in the year of grace 1907.

Helsingfors has quite the air of a Capital, with a big "C." There is something imposing about it, something go-ahead and determined, that makes one understand the calm with which it withstood the recent political disturbances. The storm has passed and has apparently left no mark behind, unless it is the assurance that should another storm arise it would be faced as coolly.

Finland is accustomed to long winters, and the past five or six years have been very long winters

indeed. Most nations would have been cowed by such an endless night. But the Finns stood upright, shoulder to shoulder, and waited; without excitement, without wasting energy in fighting the inevitable. Just sure stolid patience, not budging an inch to the right or the left in search of a new path. The old way was good enough for them, and they would wait patiently until the wall of darkness lifted and they could march onward on the same road that their forefathers had done. Finland has to thank that dogged obstinacy of her sons and daughters for the freedom that she now enjoys.

A stranger would never realize that the Finns possessed this extraordinary reserve of stubbornness. To the ordinary observer they appear very much like other mortals. Certainly, Helsingfors gives the impression of being a gay, light-hearted city, with numerous open-air restaurants, where apparently at all times of the day excellent military music can be heard—not cheap “German” music, but music which is played by real musicians to a people who understand it. The Finns are probably the most music-loving nation in the world. The first melody that greeted me as I settled myself and my luggage in the very limited space of a Finnish cab, was that of “The Merry Widow.” It gave me quite the feeling of having brought the world with me, and this feeling was not decreased when I was shown into the luxurious quarters reserved for me at the Societets-huset, the chief hotel of Helsingfors. By the way, let me impress on intending travellers to Finland that when they have mastered that word they have learnt the name of every hotel in the Grand Duchy. From

the capital to the humblest of villages boasting a roof to shelter strangers, the hotel will be called Societets-huset. This word translated literally means "society house," which I suppose in English would signify "assembly-rooms," the hotel of the town being, as a rule, the principal place for public and social gatherings.

The Societetshuset of Helsingfors has recently been thoroughly done up and refurnished. The rooms are large, and have all the modern comforts of a first-class hotel—except for the one disadvantage, that bath-rooms are not attached to private suites. It is necessary to give half an hour's notice before taking a hot bath, in order that the bath-room may be heated and prepared with the numerous sheets which are considered necessary for the comfort of the bather. Amongst the unusual luxuries in a Finnish bath-room is a couch spread with snowy linen on which to repose one's self after one's bath. Another somewhat astonishing innovation to British eyes is the presence of a bath-woman, dressed in a short-sleeved scarlet twilled gown and white apron, and armed with an immense kind of loofah made of a wood fibre, which can only be used once. She is there ready to give you the scrubbing that is reminiscent of your nursery days, and if English prejudice is too strong against this proceeding, the only thing to be done is to place your hands gently but firmly on her shoulders and conduct her out of the room.

Most people leave their own country to obtain new sensations, and if the above is too drastic there are many others. One of them is to dine at four

o'clock, the fashionable hour in England, I believe, when Queen Anne reigned, the fashionable hour still in Finland. Finland is a land of contrasts. Telephones and electric light go side by side with the quaint old-world customs which elsewhere have long since disappeared. Of course, in the larger towns it is possible to order a dinner *à la carte* at any hour, and should an Englishman desire it at midnight, a Finnish cook would not be surprised. But if you wish to get a glimpse of Finnish life you must dine at the hour of the country.

For my first dinner in Helsingfors I decided to patronize the most ideal summer restaurant in Europe. It is called the Klippa, and is built on the summit of a solitary seabound granite rock, situated between the fortress and the town. From the spacious verandas with which it is enclosed on all sides, it is easy to imagine that the whole building is a modern Noah's Ark floating on the surface of the waters. The view obtained is superb, and I am positive that the most *blasé* diner would regain his pristine appetite with that wonderful breath of the sea upon him. In close proximity to the Klippa is the charming Helsingfors Yacht Club. Little steamers run to and from the town every few minutes. The Klippa is certainly the favourite summer restaurant in Helsingfors, and from there one realizes what a magnificent natural site the capital of Finland possesses, surrounded as it is on three sides by the sea, and yet so well guarded by an outer ridge of granite cliff that all shipping can safely anchor within the naturally formed harbours.

Helsingfors was founded by the Swedish King

Gustaf Wasa, in the year 1550. From the first its special advantages for trade were remarkable. The new port became so flourishing that many merchants from Sweden, Germany, and Holland settled there, and Johan III. of Sweden was obliged to issue a special edict in 1607 preventing foreigners from abusing the rights of the recently founded town, it having been brought to his notice that the greater part of the foreigners, after they had amassed fortunes, returned to their own country, taking their money with them. The new law was to the effect that any merchant having made a fortune there, should, on leaving the country, forfeit a third of his gains for the good of the town.

The Helsingfors of to-day, with its wide streets, imposing buildings, and parks, is of quite recent growth. Old Helsingfors has disappeared almost entirely, and from the modern glass-built verandas of the Klippa it is difficult to conjure a picture of the one-storied, low-roofed wooden houses that still existed when our grandmothers were young. The older generation assure us that the Helsingfors of the present day, although new and imposing, is socially not to be compared to what it was in their youth. Then people understood how to amuse themselves, and balls and parties succeeded each other in bewildering numbers. Then, instead of the blaze of electric lights that now flood the town, linkmen with swaying lamps lit up the darkness of the long winter nights, and helped them to alight from their cumbersome sledges, that for the most part are nowadays to be found in the old lofts, visited only by the moonbeams that play across the tattered cushions.

The young people of the modern Helsingfors despise the gaieties of their grandmothers. They prefer outdoor sport to the slow measures of forgotten dances. Young girls compete for the honour of wearing the white caps with the gold lyre of a University student, rather than for that of being the toast of a season. Education, it appears, has in a great measure ousted the social gaieties of the capital, and the love of being independent has crept into all ranks. The daughters of good families, who would have swooned a generation or two ago at the thought of soiling their white fingers with work, are now discontented unless they can get a place in some bank or office. This intense desire to be independent is the most surprising outcome of late years, and has been the utter ruin of society. True there are theatres and concerts in profusion all through the autumn and winter season, and families entertain their own immediate circle of relations and friends. But the numerous balls and masquerades, and the open hospitality of the past, have gone as completely out of fashion as the low-necked dresses and old-world flower-wreaths of bygone generations. Only the other day a handsome young girl, the daughter of a wealthy family, boasted to me that she had never worn a *décolleté* frock in her life. "In Finland we are above such vanities," she said laughingly.

That girl was a type of the Finland of to-day.

Personally, modern Helsingfors annoys me, it is so painfully prosaic and unromantic. The city, indeed, has never had any particular romance connected with it. From the first it was an ordinary mercantile port, and when the University was removed

of splendid lime trees is still there, with that exquisite glimpse of the sea at the further end; also an old villa that is built so close to the shore that it appears almost to touch the water's edge.

A romantic story is attached to this special villa. The late Henrik Borgström, a wealthy citizen of Helsingfors, who owned the greater part of Brunspark, also possessed that particular site, and one day, some sixty years ago, a lady, deeply veiled, came to him and asked to be allowed to build a villa upon it. She obtained the desired permission. Then it became known that the veiled lady who had taken a fancy to build a villa as close to the seashore as possible was the wealthy Russian Princess Y—. An army of workmen erected the house almost as quickly as in a fairy tale. The principal points about its architecture were the immense verandas that overlooked the sea and the Fortress of Sveaborg. In an incredibly short time a train-load of valuable furniture from St. Petersburg was deposited in it, and the eccentric princess, as she was called, took up her residence in her hastily made home. There she lived for a few months in the strictest seclusion, and people gave up wondering for what reason she had chosen to live there. Then the town was suddenly electrified by hearing that a state prisoner at the Fortress of Sveaborg had leapt, one dark autumn night, into the water, and had apparently escaped in an inexplicable manner. Later it became known that with the first gleam of dawn the princess's yacht had been seen speeding her way towards the highway of the world—the ocean.

The villa, which, needless to add, was never again

occupied by its original owner, looked beautiful that evening with the sinking sun flaming upon it, and the hedges of white roses—a little common white rose, almost like a wild rose, that has always grown luxuriantly on that poor rock-bound soil—a mass of snow-white bloom. The breeze scattered their petals upon the surface of the motionless waters. But this is not to be a book of reminiscences—it is to be a book of impressions, rather : impressions which other holiday-makers in Finland may compare, or contrast, with their own.

CHAPTER II

A lost daughter—An old-world market—The victory of woman—A fashionable promenade—The power of music—A granite palace—A picture that magnetizes—Albert Edelfelt—Four years ago—Some memories—Burning the forest—Notable pictures—The Senate Square—The University—The first book printed in Finland—The coronation of Nicolas II.—The Empress—Historic autographs—The pen that gave Finland freedom—A chivalrous Emperor.

THE mighty ocean that rolls into the north of Europe and breathes its last into the grey mists of the Baltic Sea, has given something of its own restlessness and power to those two great arms—one outstretched towards the north, the long and shallow Gulf of Botnia; the other towards the east, the deep Gulf of Finland. These two powerful gulfs clasp the shores of Finland with the strength and tenacity of a mother clasping a daughter to her breast. Finland is called "the Lost Daughter of the Sea," and in truth no title could describe her better. Tradition says the first name by which this northern country was known was "Suonen-Saari"—the Isles of Finland. No one who has travelled in Finland and who has seen the countless lakes, gulfs, and bays that intersect the whole land, the deep dells that have once been the bottom of the ocean, the high hills on the summits of which had been found the remains

of ancient Viking ships and the fossilized bones of mammoth animals, can fail to see the fitness of the title, "Lost Daughter of the Sea." Through the lapse of untold centuries island upon island rose upon the surface of the receding waters that refused to give up all foothold in the land they had owned, and formed themselves into those thousand lakes and waterways that now charm our eye. Castles built two centuries since still show the water-mark of the waves that had once beaten against their outer walls, although a stretch of green meadow-land now divides them from the shallow waters.

Who can foretell the future? Perhaps when our age is looked upon as something fading away in the dim past, airships may skim through the skies and their crew look down upon some ragged rocks cutting through the surface of the waters, and say, "That used to be England," and then fly back to the wide arid Finnish plains.

I was in the midst of these geographical speculations one morning, when I remembered that I had an engagement to visit the University, the State Library, the Atheneum, the Diet House, the National Archives, the House of Nobles, one or two museums, besides the National Gallery of paintings. I had an uncomfortable conviction that half, if not three-quarters, of this programme would not be got through. I looked at my watch, and saw it wanted five minutes to eleven, and remembered that at one o'clock punctually I had to catch a little steamer to go to one of the many country homes situated on one of the outlying fjords. The circuit of Helsingfors may be made very easily in two hours, so I sauntered at my ease down

the wide stone staircase of the hotel, unheeding of the majestic hall porter's stern demand "if the honourable gentleman desired a cab"—no self-respecting porter likes to see a guest depart on foot. A hundred pigeons craned their heads at me, from the roof of the hotel portico, as the big glass doors shut behind me. Then they turned their attention again to the scene in front of them. It was a very familiar picture to those pigeons, and day by day, through winter and summer, they know that the immense cobbled-stone square facing the entrance of the Societetshuset will be transformed from the early hours of morn to midday into one of the liveliest, busiest market-places imaginable.

That market is a veritable delight to the eye of the visitor, it is so ridiculously primitive and old-fashioned. There are lines upon lines of quaint booths, and rows of springless two-wheeled market-carts, with patient little Finnish horses standing as motionless as if they had been made of the same ginger-bread that a smiling market-woman, the fattest I had ever seen, offered to me as I wended my way through their midst. The market was too tempting—I forgot all about state archives and picture galleries. Some lilies of the valley, plucked that morning from a forest glade, hung their heads wearily, even when in contact with big cool cabbages. Dainty ladies picked up their skirts, and showed their pretty ankles, as they threaded their way here, there, and everywhere, inspecting minutely the goods on the various stalls, always followed by a plump, red-cheeked handmaiden, bearing a huge old-world wicker basket, from which a very varied assortment of edibles

peeped out. At that market you can buy everything—meat, poultry, fruit, vegetables, milk, butter, flowers, even to the humble wild lilies. The hum of voices is something astonishing. There are apparently no fixed prices, and a tragedy of renunciation may be observed in the parting of a bunch of carrots to a customer who has bargained too hard. One especial bunch of carrots caught my attention. They appeared to me to be very ordinary carrots, but their owner, an old man, bent nearly double with his years, lifted them tenderly from the corner of his cart. The would-be customer was an elderly woman with sharp greedy eyes. I could see from the first that it would go badly with that old man. The scene that took place between them would have brought the house down in a London theatre. Every emotion of which a human countenance is capable was portrayed in turn upon both faces—polite inquiry, astonishment, contempt, incredulity, wounded pride, determination, hesitation, avarice; finishing up at last with triumph on the one side and resignation on the other, as the much-debated bunch of carrots was victoriously carried off by the woman. The divine Sarah could have learnt something from them.

The silver-plumed pigeons in the mean time were models of good behaviour. They sat in their hundreds and thousands waiting for the sound of the midday gun, which every day was the signal that their hour had arrived. In an incredibly short time the great cobbled-stone square is empty. The booths, the market-carts, the fat old market-women have all disappeared, and an army of winged scavengers flock down upon the deserted market-place, and pick up

their daily meal from the refuse. Wonderful scavengers they are! The men who follow in their track a few minutes later, armed with brooms and enormous water-hoses, have an easy job. An hour after midday, the most fastidious member of the L.C.C. could not find so much as a bit of straw to annoy him upon those shining white cobbled stones that look clean enough to eat one's dinner off.

Without that daily market Helsingfors would starve. Butchers, greengrocers, dairies, as we understand them, have no existence in Finland. The delight of a tradesman calling for orders is an unknown felicity to a Finnish cook.

After I had sauntered through that delightful market, I crossed the square to the Esplanade, the most fashionable resort in Helsingfors. It is a long wide street, one side bordered with fine stone buildings, and the other with shady trees and brilliant flower-beds. In the centre of the gardens is the fine statue of Runeberg, the great poet of Finland. It is the work of his almost equally famous son, the veteran sculptor, W. Runeberg. On each anniversary of the poet's death the students meet there and sing some of his patriotic songs. The statue is then almost hidden with wreaths and flowers placed there by all classes. In fact, so much reverence is paid to his memory, and patriotic enthusiasm is raised to such a pitch, that during the recent political troubles it was forbidden to assemble there.

At the corner of the Esplanade is the well-known open-air restaurant Kapellet, which is always the Mecca of every stranger to Helsingfors. There one can sit and enjoy a glass of anything that refreshes,

and listen to as good a band as it is possible to obtain. Numerous small tables and chairs are placed beneath the shade of the trees, and, in case of rain, there is a large well-ventilated veranda of the restaurant to fall back on. From either place one can hear the music excellently, and watch the passers-by. One thing that struck me forcibly was the rapt attention of the humbler classes to the music. One old peasant-woman, wearing upon her head the coloured cotton handkerchief of her class, was leaning against a tree close to the bandstand, and her whole soul seemed to have gone out to the melody that was being played. It was an old Finnish ballad. The haunting refrain never left me all day, nor the expression of that old woman's face. It was seared with wrinkles, and the hand of time had bent her back. But as she listened, she seemed to grow straight again, and a light of youth filled her eyes. That melody was born in the heart of the forest, that is ever young and ever old. Its origin is unknown. Perhaps the weather-beaten firs whispered it to the newborn green leaves of spring as they laid their wonderful freshness against their grey moss-grown stems. When I am old, if I hear that melody, I am sure that I shall feel the green leaves of my youth breaking through the greyness of years. That lovely tune carries spring and the green sap of new life with it. It is the song that the liberated waters sing when the ice breaks. It is the song that the swaying petals of thousands of wild flowers breathe to the blue skies of spring. It is the song that calls out for the mating of all living creatures, and sends a throb of delight through veins grown sluggish and

eyes grown dim. More than that, it is the song that softens the heart and is the great enemy of Hate.

I saw tears fall down the withered cheeks of that old woman. That music made me wish to see one of those forest glades, and I knew the nearest approach to reality that could be found in Helsingfors was one of Lindholm's or Munsterhjelm's pictures. So I hailed a passing droschka and drove to the Atheneum.

The Atheneum is one of the town's most imposing buildings, and is the home of all the arts in Finland. It is built of splendid blocks of Finnish granite, in the Renaissance style, with an ornate and richly decorated exterior. The interior is of lofty proportions, and possesses a splendid marble staircase, leading from the vestibule to the upper floor, which is reserved for the Finnish national art collections.

The foreign pictures are comparatively of small importance, although examples can be found of Corot, Bouveret, Greuze, Ruisdal, Teniers, and others.

However, no one ought to fail in seeing the splendid collection of paintings by Finnish artists. Some of those appeal to me more than any others I have seen in world-famed Continental galleries. I own I am no judge of art. What interests me especially is that strange quality in a canvas that draws you before it and makes you look at it until the picture is a picture no longer, but a thing alive which either repels you or fascinates you, but which in either case compels your attention.

Such a picture is the great historical painting by Albert Edelfelt, depicting Duke Carl of Sweden beside



DUKE CARL OF SWEDEN BESIDE THE BIER OF COUNT FLEMMING
BY A. EDELFEELT

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the bier of his enemy Count Clas Flemming, commandant of Åbo Castle.

The famous old castle had bravely held out against a prolonged siege, and only by the death of its gallant commander was it at length obliged to capitulate. The victor, Duke Carl, enraged at death having baulked him of his enemy, pulls the beard of the dead man as he is lying in his coffin, and exclaims to the widow of his enemy, who is standing by: "Madame, if Clas Flemming were living, his head would not be so secure as it is now."

"If Clas Flemming were living," she answers proudly, "your Highness would not be here."

This well-known incident is speakingly portrayed by Edelfelt in this picture. The cruel face of the duke, the queenly bearing of the undaunted countess, the shrinking fear of the beautiful girl attendant at her side, the downcast eye and reverent air of the dead man's body-servant who is holding the keys of the castle in his hand, the callous countenances of the soldiers in the background waiting for orders to replace the coffin lid—they are all in their different ways masterpieces of expression. A photograph gives but a poor idea of the strength of that picture. The colouring alone is so wonderful. The gorgeous attire of the duke and the clinging black velvet gown of the countess, combined with that dull background of old grey stone walls, are an inspiration. Edelfelt painted that picture before his name had become a household word in his own country, and fame in many lands had held out her arms towards him. But I think he has never done anything better.

Finland had reason indeed to mourn Edelfelt's loss

when, in the best years of his manhood, a chill contracted by carelessness laid him in an all too early grave during the spring of 1904. The last time I saw him was six years ago at a public dinner at Helsingfors. His courteous manners and tall, well-set-up figure would have made him noticeable in any assembly, and he was a general favourite with all who knew him. The news that Edelfelt's blue eyes would never again light up with that intense joy of life that seemed to sparkle from him was at first not credited. He had always appeared the embodiment of vigorous health. His death was not only a personal loss to innumerable friends, but a national disaster. The last big work he had undertaken was a series of frescoed panels for the walls of the great hall in the Helsingfors University, picturing scenes from the opening of the first Finnish University in Åbo in 1640. This unfinished work speaks more eloquently than any words of the loss Albert Edelfelt has been to his country.

I well remember that evening in 1902. Walter Runeberg, the veteran sculptor, with his leonine white locks and finely moulded head, was there. He beamed with goodwill as he spoke words of encouragement to the rising generation of artists. Some had "arrived" and some had not, but they all listened with enthusiasm to the old master. Beside him stood Jean Sibelius, as yet not lifted to that pinnacle of fame to which his musical genius has raised him since. The genial General von Lindfors, whose open-hearted hospitality and never-failing good spirits made him beloved in all circles, sat next to me at that memorable gathering. He has also, like

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BURNING THE FOREST

Albert Edelfelt, been called away to join the great majority since then. I see many gaps in those ranks, and one wonders will such men be replaced; and yet Death has not conquered entirely. True, those warm hands will never grasp ours again, but the fruit of their genius is immortal. I envy men who, like Walter Runeberg, can see themselves mirrored in the sunrise of unborn ages—in years when we others shall be forgotten as the dust of yesterday.

This is a long digression from Edelfelt's picture. Some day I shall scribble down the impressions I have had of men and women in different countries. It would be the most cosmopolitan book that was ever written. I remember Mr. George Wyndham, when he was Chief Secretary for Ireland, saying to me one day in Dublin, "Our class is only one large family, irrespective of nationality." It might have been only a charming way of putting a foreigner at his ease, and Mr. Wyndham's manners are proverbially charming. But all the same I think he was right. Those that belong to the same caste have a bond of sympathy between them. The courage of that high-born woman of Finland in Edelfelt's picture was the same courage that sent the high-born French ladies to the scaffold with a smile on their lips and fresh rouge on their cheeks. Socialism, anarchism, and all the hundred madnesses that crop up like mushrooms after rain in this twentieth century of ours, will never take firm root as long as that old class exists.

It was a strange coincidence that the very next painting that attracted my attention was that grim fire-swept picture by Erro Järnefelt, one of Finland's most realistic living painters. That picture repels you,

but you could not pass it by. It is called "Sved," a word which denotes the burning down of a tract of forest-land, prior to putting it under cultivation. Giant trees are felled and dry underwood placed beneath them, which the peasants come and set alight. The devastating flames leap from stack to stack, and for miles around the sky is red with the blood of the forest. It is a grim fight between man and Nature. Man conquers at first; and the following year amongst the ashes of the forest he will sow corn that will yield him an hundred-fold. But Nature has her revenge, and after that one crop the land becomes a wilderness—a black spot of desolation upon which no living thing will ever thrive again. Only a decade or two ago this practice was common enough all over Finland, but now it has been forbidden by the Government. In the far north it is, however, still resorted to, and I noticed this year several tracts of burnt land reeking with smouldering fires.

That girl's face depicted in Järnefelt's picture, lit up by the lurid flames, is a thing that is not easy to forget. Its strange realism grips you. The awful toil, the terrible heat, the intense poverty of those working men and women, all strike you in turn. That young girl's face expresses it all. She is looking far beyond the leaping flames into a world that she alone sees, and her soul is crying out in its utter desolation.

I turned from the picture with relief, and feasted my eyes for some time on that exquisite little cottage interior, by K. E. Jansson, called "An Offer of Marriage." The old man who acts the part of intermediary between the eager lover waiting outside the open door and the modest maiden who is twisting her

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AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE
BY K. E. JANSSON

apron in bashful indecision, and the rapt admiring faces of the old father and mother, are admirably depicted.

The picture next to it, by A. Liljelund, has not got quite the same charm, and yet in its way it is also Dutch-like in its delicate treatment. Here the scene is not so romantic. Necessity has evidently obliged the young wife to part with some of her rich hoards to the would-be wealthy purchaser, who is scrutinizing the gay fabric she is holding out for his inspection. He does not notice the pretty face scanning his so anxiously. Its charm is not lost, however, on the young University student standing near. Her husband, meanwhile, is calmly sitting at his ease and smoking a pipe with true Finnish stolidity.

Pictures of this kind always interest me more than those of the modern schools, with their crude colouring and clumsy drawing. Before leaving the galleries I lingered in front of those bewitching pictures of great silent lakes and forest-glades by Lindholm and H. Munsterhjelm. I know of no possession that I would sooner have than a landscape by either of them. They make you understand so clearly that God made the forest, and man made the city.

After I left the Atheneum I almost unconsciously wended my steps towards the Senate Square, the largest open space in Helsingfors, and the main-spring of the whole country. Here are the most important buildings of the town. On the right is the University, on the left the Senate House, and between them stands the Lutheran Cathedral of St. Nicolas, with its immense flight of stone steps, which rival those of St. Peter's in Rome in width and height.

However, the exterior of St. Nicolas's is its only attraction, and a pilgrimage up those formidable steps is not advised. The interior of the cathedral is modern and without interest.

A visit to the University is worth the trouble. Personally I am never tired of looking at those magnificent doors, which are now placed in the great hall of the University, and which originally belonged to the old University of Åbo. They were brought to Helsingfors in 1827, when the University was removed from the old capital to the new one. They are of splendid proportions and are made of polished mahogany, richly ornamented with raised designs of solid bronze. The Vatican itself does not possess doors that could rival them in magnificence, and I believe they could easily hold their own against the world. The hall itself is built like an amphitheatre, and is not particularly attractive. The frescoes, which I have alluded to before, and which were just begun before the death of Edelfelt, would doubtless have greatly improved it. Only one is completed. It represents the historic procession of July 15, 1640, in Åbo when the University of Finland was solemnly opened by Count Per Brahe.

Below the lectern is a colossal bust in bronze of the Emperor Alexander I., the Imperial benefactor of the Finnish University. The bust was also brought from Åbo in 1827, and was one of the few things that escaped the devastating fire which occurred during that year, and which laid the old capital of Finland in ashes. Thinking of that memorable fire made me wend my steps towards the Library. Books always appeal to me, and particularly those fire-scorched

ancient MSS. which are all that Finland now possesses of what was once one of the finest libraries of the fifteenth century. Fire has claimed many things, but few things of greater value than that famous library of Åbo.

Amongst the few relics of the past that were saved is the first book that was printed in Finland, an A B C book by Bishop Mickael Agricola, published in 1542. The copy in the Helsingfors University library is in perfect preservation, as fortunately it had been lent a few days before the outbreak of the fire to a neighbouring professor residing outside the town. This is the only copy, excepting a very imperfect one at the Swedish University in Upsala, that exists in the world. The charming young librarian, Mr. Lenning, whose courtesy and patience exceeded anything I had experienced before, was the most excellent guide any one could have wished for. He led the way, through a very maze of rooms and corridors loaded with dead men's thoughts. As I held that little A B C book in my hands it was difficult to realize that those few pages were the precursor of all those masses of books that surrounded me. Poor faded book! it looked so small and insignificant. I could hold it easily in the palm of one hand, and yet once it had been the finest printed book in Finland and doubtless the pride of its creator. I returned it to the charge of Mr. Lenning with something akin to awe. The presence of the great Bishop Mickael Agricola seemed to stand between us, and from that great army of dead men that surrounded us a million voices cheered the man who had first brought to them the blessings

of print. The old saying that extremes meet was very true on that occasion, for my guide then drew my attention to what is probably one of the largest books in the world, measuring no less than 3 ft. by 2½ ft. It is one of a few presentation copies issued by the Imperial Russian press, descriptive of the coronation of the Emperor Alexander II. and his consort the Empress Marie, in the year 1857, at Moscow. It possesses wonderful coloured engravings, quite Eastern in their barbaric magnificence. But then the crowning of a Russian ruler within the walls of the old Kremlin is the most gorgeous sight that can be imagined. I can speak from personal experience, as I was present at the coronation of the present Emperor Nicolas II. and his beautiful Empress. The same pomp, the same reckless extravagance, the same glitter of gold and jewels that fascinate the eye in the pages of that book, were also evident at the coronation of his grandson.

Amidst that brilliant scene, I shall never forget the expression of that woman clad in those wonderful imperial robes and just crowned the consort of a ruler of the largest empire in the world. She was deadly pale and had the fixed look of some one seeing a thing that terrifies them. On that day people said the strain of the long ceremonies had overtaxed the strength of the Empress. But since that May morning, 1896, many things have happened, which show that the people may have been wrong in their conclusions. . . . I turned from the book with a sensation of thankfulness that my lot in life was the humble one it is.

From the University I went to the Archives—a

new building erected a few years ago at considerable expense by the nation. The public are admitted every day from eleven to two. The oldest document in Finland can be seen there. It is an edict on parchment for the protection of women in Karelen (Eastern Finland), dated 1316. No wonder women of the present day have such privileges in Finland, if they commenced to clamour for their rights at such an early date!

Another interesting document, although of much later date, is the marriage contract between Count Åke Tott and Kristina Brahe, 1639. Attached to it are no less than thirteen broad, green, watered silk ribbons, each of them furnished with an immense red wax seal bearing the arms of the thirteen witnesses of the marriage. Amongst other treasures to be seen are the autographs of Gustav Adolf II. of Sweden, Charles XII. of Sweden, and Catherine the Great of Russia, besides numerous others of less world-wide celebrity. The historic quill with which Alexander I. of Russia signed the Constitution of Finland at Borga, in 1809, is also kept there. If the love of a people constitutes happiness, then Alexander I. must have been the happiest of men. No man ever conquered a land as he did. Finland was in sore straits when he came to her. Famine and ceaseless wars had almost extinguished hope within the breasts of her sons and daughters. Then, instead of the victor placing a still heavier yoke across their bleeding shoulders, he gave them the healing balsam of life—Freedom! Only this year a book has been published describing the Emperor's memorable journey through Finland—a journey few would have

undertaken. He appeared to have been immune against fatigue and hardships such as we can but faintly realize with our modern ideas of travelling. That imperial journey, close upon a hundred years ago, in a country which for the greater part did not even possess roads, and which was so sparsely populated that for days the imperial party saw no human habitation, was an act of chivalrous self-denial that alone would have made Alexander I. beloved by his Finnish people. The memory of that noble Emperor is still kept green in the hearts of the people. Finns are slow to forget—either a kindness or a wrong.

CHAPTER III

A sine quâ non of greatness—An old home—A Finnish hostess—Turholm—Midsummer customs—A type of other days—Magic of the Finns—Their origin—A romantic legend—Advice to a young husband—Obstinacy of their race—A noble citizen—Four centuries ago—Helsingfors observatory—A gorgeous sunset—An open-air theatre—Love of tea-drinking—The restfulness of the North.

A CHILD once asked me if a certain town possessed a zoological garden, and when I said "No," he answered contemptuously, "Then it is not a big town." If that be a criterion of greatness, then Helsingfors may breathe a sigh of relief. No pretty woman ever desired more ardently to be considered a beauty than Helsingfors desires to be thought a big city. The zoological garden of Helsingfors is situated on an island close to the town. It is called Høgholmen, and little steamers run to and from the capital all day. The fare is only a penny, and the gardens are free, so it cannot be a very paying concern. It is a pretty little island, with numerous shady walks, and has a good summer restaurant, which, judging from the day I was there, must be the most flourishing concern at Høgholmen. It is also a favourite resort of the humbler classes, who flock there on Sundays and holidays, and form large family picnic parties in every corner of the island. However,

on week-days it is more or less deserted, and the big Iceland bears can plunge into their luxurious bath, and the favourite brown bears, natives of some far-off Finnish forest, may sit up and blink their little eyes for hours, before any one will come and throw a hunk of cake into their capacious mouths.

From the island one can obtain a delightful view of Helsingfors and the inner Archipelago, with its richly wooded shores. One of the best-known estates in the neighbourhood of Helsingfors is Turholm. This was the country seat of the late Henrik Borgström, who spent a fortune in laying out the beautiful grounds and park. Turholm was the spoilt child of this autocratic old gentleman, to whom Helsingfors owes so much. One of his gifts to the town was Tölo, the largest public park in the city. He died in 1883, and his bust in bronze by Walter Runeberg has been placed in Tölo park by the citizens of Helsingfors as a token of their gratitude for his generosity towards them. My earliest recollections are centred round Turholm, with its splendid trees and old mansion, which gave such open-hearted hospitality to all who entered within. Now the home I knew so well has passed away, and only the ghosts of other days wander through the well-known rooms. The last owner of Turholm was a granddaughter of Henrik Borgström and wife of Colonel Rudolph de Schulman. She left it at her death, two years ago, as a gift to the nation. The old place has now been turned into a home for poor ladies, and the park is open to all. Already the sign of deterioration is painfully evident everywhere. The park has lost that air of dignity and perfect order which was one of

its chief attractions. This was the first visit I had made to Finland since the place had become public property, and I took the first opportunity to re-visit this familiar spot. I had been dining at Brändö, an estate in the near neighbourhood of Turholm. Brändö house, with its quaint low-pitched rooms, reminded me more of an old English manor than any other country place that I have seen in Finland. It was here the famous Field-Marshal Count Augustin Ehrensvärd, creator of Sveaborg, spent some years of his life. My hostess, Baroness Eva Cronstedt, who did the honours of her charming home with the utmost graciousness, kindly placed at my disposal a rowing boat, to row across the water to Turholm.

There is nothing quite so sad as a home that has fallen into decay, and I regretted that my curiosity had led me there. I had hardly walked a hundred yards before I turned back. And yet all that evening I could not forget those fine old trees of Turholm standing there with the shadows upon them, and the voices of other days whispering through their branches.

I wonder if I shall ever see the old place again. If so, I hope it will be on Midsummer Eve, because then the magic light that transforms the humblest thing into beauty would make Turholm as it was. Midsummer is the great annual festival of Finland. From every height a bonfire leaps to the sky in honour of the mating of Night and Day, who are then united. The Finns possess a poetical legend relating to this annual custom. Koit and Amarik, the sunset and sunrise, beseeched the Lord of the Sky to give them permission to be eternally a bride

and bridegroom and once a year to clasp each other in their glowing arms.

I remember once counting over a hundred such fires, clearly visible from the height on which I was standing. Surely no mortal bride and bridegroom have ever been so feted! I sincerely hope this delightful old custom will never be abandoned. In Finland it is becoming too much the fashion to scoff at the things our forefathers did. Young people think that old legends and customs are derogatory to their intellects, and imagine themselves to be "advanced" and "enlightened" when in reality they have but become hopelessly uninteresting and bereft of the dignity and charm of a past generation.

However, the influences of modernity have not penetrated to the root of the people. There is no nation in the world more superstitious than the Finns. The magic which their forefathers believed in is still part of their inmost nature. It is an inheritance from the dim ages of the past that no civilization has been able quite to destroy. I only heard this year of a patient who was ordered by the wise man of the village to swim in a stream that flowed to the north; another to roll himself in the dew of a cemetery; and a third to go nine times towards the sun as it was rising. These cures were evidently considered infallible for their divers ills, and were at least easy to accomplish. It is amazing to think that these things are still possible in our matter-of-fact days. Possibly they owe their survival to the self-centred existence of the Finns. They have always allowed other nations to govern them and yet have managed to keep themselves entirely apart. "Looking

to heaven, and lost the earth," is an old saying of theirs. The cradle of the Finnish race is of unknown antiquity, and the exact origin of this strange race is still uncertain. They are known to be descended from the great warrior tribes of Hungary, who in their turn sprang from a race of giants called Tschuds. Tradition says that after continual warfare with other descendants of the Tschuds, the Finns succeeded in getting a foothold where no man hitherto had lived. But even then they were not left in peace. At length they agreed to a truce, and it was arranged that whoever could first cut down a tree of the forest should henceforth claim the land and the other march out of it. The Tschud with all his strength commenced to cut at the root, but the Finn lifted his axe and felled the tree above his head, and thus won the land.

After that the centuries tell us very little about them. The first reliable knowledge we have is from the oldest Swedish chronicles that tell of a wild, heathen country which now and again some very virtuous Swedish king endeavoured to convert to Christendom by attempting a crusade to that land of darkness. The extraordinary tenacity with which the Finns clung to their old heathen faith is well known. It took those fighting Scandinavians, who had conquered with comparative ease England and Normandy, more than a hundred and fifty years to master this small race. At length King Erik of Sweden succeeded in landing an army in 1157, and his brother, Bishop Henrik (who was afterwards canonized by the Church of Rome, and named patron saint of Finland), baptized the first converts to

Christianity in the same year. But we get well into the thirteenth century before we find anything like peace established between heathenism and Christianity. Even later so much belief was maintained in the magic of the Finns that Gunhild, a proud Norwegian maid, came to Finland for two years to win, through their medium, the love of the Swedish king. There is also another tale told of a beautiful Finnish maiden called Snöfrid (the Peace of the Snow), with whom King Harold of Sweden fell so desperately in love that for her sake he gave up his wealth and power and came and resided in Finland. After some years Snöfrid died, but her complexion did not alter, and her wonderful beauty shone with the same radiance as in her lifetime. The king would not be persuaded to leave her, and for three years he watched by her side. At length, in despair one of his courtiers advised him to change her clothes, when her body fell to ashes, and he returned to rule his country.

Love potions had no small place in the magic of the Finns. They say the old magic of Finland still exists, and, if so, it might be well worth the journey for some love-sick swain or maiden to come here to obtain their heart's desire. However, to be honest, I must warn English maidens that in the fifteenth runo of Kaleva, the great epic poem of Finland, the following advice is given to a young husband to break in a wife: "First year, kind words. Second year, command with the eye. Third year, with a light stamping of the foot. If this is not sufficient, the fourth year touch her with a birch-rod." Further advice is not given. Doubtless, the poor wife is curbed by then!

At least, any ordinary wife would be ; but it is true that this referred to a Finnish wife, and a Finnish woman is almost as obstinate as a Finnish man.

This Finnish obstinacy is the outcome of centuries of endurance. Every field of corn has been fought for against odds that would have conquered others. Most races would have fled from this land of morass and forest, wrapped in the silence of eight months of frost, when no living thing is heard, and all is stagnant and lifeless. But the Finns remembered those four months given to them as a recompense for their endurance—those four months of life, when the forests would teem with countless singing birds, when the day would have no night, when sunlight, that miraculous power of sunlight, would make every growing thing wax strong and multiply. They would work sometimes twenty hours out of the twenty-four to conquer that earth and make it yield to them the fruits of harvest.

In Helsingfors, it is difficult to picture this Northern Finland of which I speak. Helsingfors seems to have no connection with the untrodden forests and desolate lakes that are still to be found within a two-days' journey of that spick-and-span capital. The majority of holiday-makers are quite content to wander no further afield. The Finland that is to be found at Helsingfors is so delightfully familiar. It is just the place for those in search of good restaurants, good hotels, good bands, and jolly little excursions which even the least energetic may undertake without undue fatigue.

Though some of Finland's great men have migrated to Helsingfors long after fame had already placed

her crown of laurels upon their brows, only one man of genius was born in the city. That man was the noted astronomer, Sigfrid Aronus Forcius, who was born at Helsingfors in 1560, of unknown parents. It was his brain that invented the first modern almanack. In the year 1597 he became the head professor of astronomy and mathematics at the University of Upsala in Sweden, but worldly honours and promotion were not the ambition of this stargazer, because when the King of Sweden offered him as a recompense for his learning any post he desired, Sigfrid Aronus replied, "Sire, give me the smallest parish in your kingdom, with the stars above." He obtained his desire, and was appointed in 1613 Vicar of Eknäs, the smallest parish in Finland, not far from Helsingfors. There for many years he watched his beloved stars, but became an object of dislike and fear to his parishioners, who said he was in league with the devil. The rumours of his misdoings became so widespread that at length he was tried for witchcraft, and was incarcerated in a Swedish castle, where he died in 1637. He possessed a marvellous power of foretelling the future. It is said he did his utmost to persuade Charles IX. of Sweden to give up his campaign against the Poles in 1605, warning him of a sign he had read in the heavens in which he foresaw that the king would be wounded in battle, his horse shot, and his life endangered. All this actually happened at the battle of Kerkholm. Another time, during his residence at Eknäs, he warned a large wedding party not to proceed to the church by water. The fjord was as calm as a millpond, and the party laughed at the old man's warning and tried to make

him accompany them. But Sigfrid Aronus was obdurate, and went by himself the land route. Half-way across the fjord a sudden storm arose, and the whole wedding party were drowned.

Sigfrid Aronus was a man born before his time. He groped in the dark for a match that another man in another century was to find and strike. A stargazer has now no penalty to pay for his hobby. If Aronus returned to Helsingfors to-day he would find a familiar hill crowned with a fine observatory. It was built in 1833, designed by the same architect, Engel, who built most of the public buildings of Helsingfors. In 1890 a spacious tower was added to it, and extensive alterations were made in the grounds. The observatory hill is considered one of the attractions of Helsingfors. The gardens are beautifully kept and are always a glow of colour during the summer. On the extreme summit of the hill is a wide, gravelled terrace, surrounded with comfortable seats, whence a gorgeous view is obtained of the harbour, the outer archipelago, and beyond it a limitless waste of waters fading away into the far horizon.

There stands upon this hill a colossal group in bronze by one of Finland's younger sculptors, Robert Stigell. It is called "Shipwrecked," and is admirably conceived and executed. A man is the central figure—a man of giant strength and herculean proportions. One arm is uplifted above his head, and his whole body expresses the fierceness of his desire for life as he shouts for help. A woman clings to him, and in her eyes the mists of death are already gathering. In her arms she holds a little child, and another is just

on the point of being carried away from the rock to which they are clinging. Set in this spot, the vitality of the work almost shocks you. It is out of keeping with its placid surroundings.

Having feasted my eyes that evening on the wonderful view from the terrace of the Observatory, I hastened down the hill and jumped into the first cab I saw, and drove to the open-air theatre at Brunspark. The sturdy little Finnish horse well bore up the reputation that they are the fastest ponies in Europe. The driver, a stolid-faced boy, drove abominably, his sole idea being apparently to tug at the mouth of his unfortunate steed with all the strength he was capable of. However, the plucky little horse did not seem to mind and ran perhaps all the faster. The Helsingfors cab fares had risen since my last visit to Finland. It used to be fifty centimes (or half a mark, Finnish currency), which is exactly the same value as half a franc, to any part of the town. Now it is seventy-five centimes. No doubt a small sum to English eyes, but an excessive tariff to the citizens of Helsingfors, who not so very long ago paid only twenty-five centimes for the same distance.

An operatic company from Stockholm were giving a performance of *La Poupée*, and there was hardly a vacant place when I arrived in the gardens. It is an agreeable way of spending an idle hour or two, particularly on a warm, fine evening, when one can enjoy the freshness of the air and a quiet smoke. The Helsingfors public make a good audience, and applaud right well any turn that takes their fancy. Between the acts any light refreshment can be ordered. Evidently tea is far and away the first

favourite. At nearly every table around me I noticed steaming tumblers of tea, served in the Russian fashion, with thinly cut slices of lemon instead of milk or cream. This love of drinking hot weak tea is the only custom that the Russians have brought into Finland. But so far the Finns have not copied their neighbours in putting spoonfuls of jam or a goodly supply of brandy into their tea, which is a most ordinary practice across the border. I did not stop to the end of the performance. I wanted to walk up that stately avenue of lime trees which still gives to Brunspark a reflection of its old glory. The moon had risen when I left the gardens, and the silver light lay across the darkened water like a shimmering ribbon. The silence was wonderful. It was difficult to believe that just behind those trees a town existed—a modern town, throbbing with the ceaseless hum of life; a town planned out on the stereotyped lines of countless other cities.

Yet the restfulness of the North, the grand solitude of this little-known country, can still be dimly felt beneath the shadows of the old trees of Brunspark.

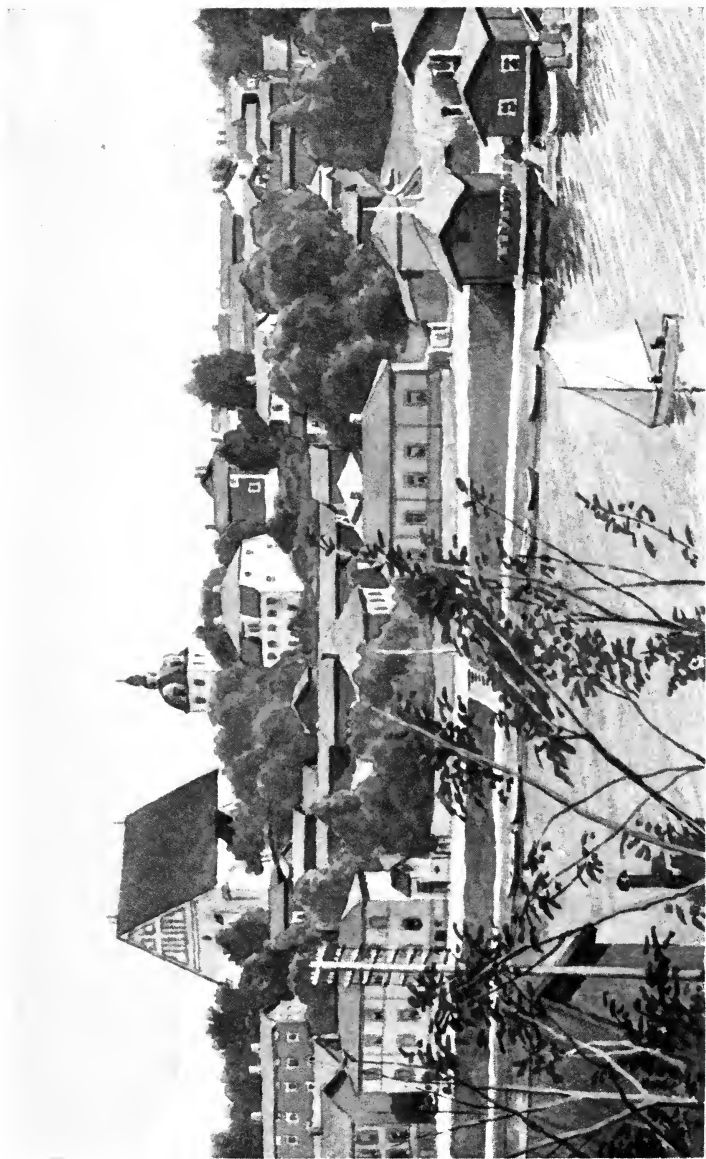
CHAPTER IV

A water excursion to Borgå—The exhilaration of the air—Summer homes—Friendly greetings—First view of Borgå—A picturesque town—The cathedral—Oldest piece of silver in Finland—A historic gathering—A room of many memories—The constitution of Finland—A famous beauty—An ancient fortress—The home of Runeberg—A garden of sleep—William Tell of Finland—The old bridge of Borgå—Borgå buns—The museum—An Emperor's sledge—The honesty of Finns—Oriental china.

THERE is one excursion which no tourist should omit before leaving Helsingfors, and that is an expedition to delightful old Borgå.

Of all the pleasurable reminiscences that I have of my trip through Finland, perhaps the hours I spent at Borgå stand out as the most delightful. I had been particularly happy in my choice of a day—it turned out to be one of those exhilarating days of the North, when the warmth of the sun seems touched with a spice of freshness impossible to describe. The air was not the usual insipid air that you breathe in without conscious sensation of any kind. It was an air that compelled you to open your mouth and fill your lungs to the utmost with breaths that gave new life to every tingling pulse—an air that made the three-hours' journey on the little steamer to Borgå slip by like three minutes. It is easy to forget time in the North, when gliding in

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and out from fjord to fjord, connected with winding waterways, so narrow at times that the overhanging branches of the trees brush against the steamer on either side, as she cuts her way between their wooded shores.

I had also the good fortune to have a delightful companion in the person of Colonel Rudolph de Schulman, who had spent some of his childhood days at Borgå, and who knew every nook and corner of the quaint old town. He must have wondered at my insatiable appetite for stories of the good old days. Like a greedy child, I wanted more and more. Those tales of old Borgå fascinated me, and I seemed to have made the acquaintance of those old-world homes long before our friendly captain (who apparently had a good word for every one of his passengers) had slowed down his craft, previous to entering the shallow waters of the picturesque river upon whose steep banks the old red, green, and yellow houses of Borgå cluster. Our steamer was the most leisurely of crafts — that is to say, she could steam away in a fine style when so inclined, and rode the waves of Sibbo fjord like a bird; but for the greater part of that journey she steered from shore to shore, stopping at the numerous landing-stages of the various summer villas that spring upon you in the most unexpected manner — charming villas, with deep balconies and open verandas, just perched on some rock, or half hidden amongst the trees.

As a rule, there is no pretence at cultivation about them. Gardens and lawns, as we understand them, are entirely absent. A Finn prefers to place his

summer abode in the most countrified surroundings that he can find. He builds a long wooden bridge of the simplest design, yet strong enough to withstand the daily onslaught of that much-looked-for steamer from Helsingfors. Then he makes a little sanded pathway to twist and bend through the shadows of the forest trees, until it touches his front door-step, where sometimes the wild pink heather forms the only carpet bedding of his ideally rural home. Those villas are like perennial flowers. They blossom out every spring, and are boarded up and deserted at the first touch of frost. Yet at every stop we made, a stranger would find something novel to occupy his attention. It is most amusing to watch the disembarkation of the passengers clad in their town clothes, with that half-important air of having only just come from the capital, greeting their children or friends, who, entirely regardless of the glances of other passengers, rush down to the landing-bridge hatless or stockingless, at the first sound of the approaching steamer's whistle.

At one place I remember two of the quaintest little girls I had ever seen waiting apparently for their mother, who, judging from their excitement and the goodly pile of market-baskets that were deposited on the bridge, must have brought them a nice fairing from town. Those little girls, about fourteen or fifteen years of age, were dressed alike in the cleanest of white starched muslin frocks, and were both hatless and bare-footed. Both possessed a pigtail of splendid flaxen hair hanging down almost to their knees and tied with blue ribbons. Behind them stood a fat, smiling servant-wench, with cheeks like

a red apple, who with the first appearance of the steamer kept on bobbing, and continued to do so until I yearned to stop her. Perhaps daily practice had made her knees pliable. *My* knees almost gave under me at the sight of her. My last view of her, when we were already well on the fjord, was wending up the steep pathway to the house, carrying in each hand a huge market-basket, but in my imagination I still saw her bobbing.

Finland appears to be the most friendly of countries. Every one seemed to be greeted with such overbrimming goodwill and pleasure that it made one think that none of those rural villas could contain anything but warm-hearted hospitality, and that uncharitable deeds or thoughts could not flourish there.

Our captain took evident interest in all his passengers. We were nearly in sight of Borgå town, our final stopping-place, and the greater part of the passengers had already disembarked, when he turned gravely towards myself. "Do you speak English?" he demanded slowly. "Yes," I replied quickly. "I cannot," he returned mournfully. Then he saluted me, and walked hastily away. I admired that captain. I suppose he did not wish to leave the least of his passengers out in the cold, and so had learnt that makeshift scrap of English dialogue in case of need.

The first view of Borgå from the water is delightful beyond words. It has not the appearance of a real town, but looks like a stretch of canvas against a background of blue sky, on which a master hand had painted the most bewildering diversity of old wooden buildings, in every possible and impossible

hue, and clustering one upon the other like banks of wild-flowers.

But Borgå is as variable as a woman. When we arrived I thought its ruling colour was red—not a harsh crude red, but a red softened with the touch of years. Every other colour seemed dominated by the red of the crimson-painted packhouses by the river-side and mirrored on the surface of the water.

But Borgå is only deceiving one in giving this impression. Almost before one has landed, one's eye forgets that first aspect of the town, and one is confronted with a steep cobble-stoned street, twisting and turning up a hill, on the summit of which stands a cluster of the quaintest old-fashioned wooden houses with yellow-painted walls.

Then again this glow of yellow fades away, and on the top of the hill you suddenly realize that yellow and red alike have been but foils to bring out more movingly the solemn greyness of the old cathedral that stands so majestically in her midst.

Borgå Cathedral was built in 1418; nearly a century later than the town itself, which, according to some historians, was founded by King Smek of Sweden in 1346. It stands in a walled-in courtyard, now grass-grown and curiously uneven. The intense light outside made my first impression of the interior vague and uncertain. Then gradually I saw the vaulted roof and majestic proportions of those old walls that have withstood the ravages of nearly six centuries.

The imprints of the Reformation have fortunately done little to injure the decorations, which are still

almost the same as in the old Catholic days, when the cathedral was in its zenith.

The pulpit is a splendid specimen of the wood-carving of the sixteenth century, and was the gift of one of the heroes of the Thirty Years' War, a certain Arvid Wittenberg, who was born at Borgå. It is painted in white and gold, surmounted by a gorgeous canopy to match, from which a dove, resplendent with crimson and gilt wings, is suspended. The quaint hour-glass, filled with sand, is still used by the preacher. The fine organ and gallery at the back of the nave are of a later date, 1780, and are also painted in white and gold.

The walls are decorated with very crude frescoes of no special interest, except that they give an added note of colour amidst that general scheme of white and gold. But the old brass wall sconces and superb crystal chandeliers from the seventeenth century would alone be worth a journey to Borgå to come and look at. They at least filled me with envy. I wondered if the good people of Borgå knew how to value them, or if they would some day become such vandals as the citizens of Åbo (the oldest cathedral town of Finland), who, some thirty or forty years ago, replaced the magnificent crystal and bronze chandeliers of their cathedral by the most hideous modern brass gas brackets that could be found.

The verger, who looked as if he also belonged to the Middle Ages, eyed me suspiciously. He held in his hands a bunch of giant keys, rusty with the age of many centuries. My attention wandered from the crystal chandeliers to those keys. They looked

as if they might open the door to some hidden treasures. After some persuasion the old man was induced to lead the way to the old consistory, now used as a vestry, where the principal treasure of the cathedral is kept, a silver cup, which is considered to be one of the oldest in the world, dated 1207, and which was brought to Borgå from Germany in the fifteenth century.

By this time our veteran guide had become more amiable, and showed us of his own accord some of the gorgeous vestments used by the bishops in the good old days. Those bishops must have used them sparingly, as they were astonishingly well preserved. One in purple velvet, ornamented with an immense crucifix in silver, and bordered with splendid silver lace, looked as if it had been made yesterday, and yet it was dated 1680. Another, in shimmering gold brocade silk, was certainly the freshest production of the weaver's art dating from that period that I have ever seen.

But it is not for such things as these that Borgå Cathedral is famous. It is because one of the most momentous incidents of Finnish history took place within its walls. It was here on March 29, 1809, with the thunder of war still vibrating in the air, that the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia, two days after he had signed the constitution which gave freedom to the country that he had conquered, received the oaths of allegiance from his newly made subjects.

As I walked out again into the sunshine, and looked down upon the motionless river that seemed as lifeless as the old wooden houses that clustered

up its steep banks, it was difficult to imagine that day, close upon a hundred years ago, which had transformed Borgå from a despised provincial village to the proudest town in Finland.

The halo of greatness that then shone over it must always light up the shadows of passing years. Old Borgå understands that other towns in Finland have sprung up and long since passed it in commercial prosperity—wealthy towns, with fine stone buildings and straight wide streets that Borgå has never known. Yet Borgå repaints her old one-storied wooden houses in the same vivid colours as of old, and year by year the sunshine mellows the grey tints of the cathedral and gives to it something of that inexplicable majesty that only age can bring forth.

Most of Europe knows with what tenacity the Finns have fought during the last few years for their independence and constitution. But few know that that very constitution, so dearly prized by them, was signed on March 29, 1809, in an upper room of a house in Borgå, by his Imperial Majesty Alexander the First of Russia.

That historic house is still standing exactly as it was. The exterior is so modest that it seems hardly possible that it once had held the Council of an Empire within its walls. The imperial pomp of the most magnificent Court in Europe appears so utterly at variance with that humble dwelling, with its old-fashioned blue-painted canvas blinds.

To-day the house is used for meetings of the bishop and clergy of the district. The famous room in which Finland obtained its freedom is open to visitors on payment of a small fee to the caretaker,

who lives in an adjoining house. The room was much larger and loftier than I had expected from the outside. The principal thing in it is an immense oil-painting, by an artist of the period, representing that memorable gathering within the walls of Borgå Cathedral two days after the constitution had been signed, when the nobles, burghers, clergy, and peasants of Finland took their oath of allegiance to the Emperor who had so chivalrously protected their rights.

The picture gives a most graphic impression of the scene. The ladies form a charming group in one of the galleries, dressed in their high-waisted old-world gowns, with ringletted hair and swan-like necks bent towards the Emperor, who stands erect with kingly bearing in the midst of that glittering throng.

One of the ladies represented was the famous beauty, Miss Möllersvärd, who married later General von Essen, a widower, who had the reputation of having the worst temper in Finland. His first wife was a Miss Reutershiold, of whom little is known except that she died young. Miss Möllersvärd divorced the general after three days of matrimony. The general was not deterred by this matrimonial mishap, for he soon found a third wife in a Miss Boyer.

This third wife, who soon became the inseparable friend of her predecessor, the beautiful Miss Möllersvärd, is said to have entirely subdued the fiery general into lamblike meekness. The first step towards this desirable change occurred when the general, in a fit of temper, rose from the dining-table and threw a glass on the floor in his wife's presence.

She returned the compliment by calmly rising from her place and quietly drawing the cloth towards her until every piece of the valuable china and glass on the table was smashed to pieces on the floor. This spirited conduct so charmed the general that for ever afterwards he was the devoted slave of his wife!

A charming impression of Borgå can be had from the ramparts of Borgbacken, the favourite walk or drive of the townspeople of Borgå. Borgbacken is the site of an ancient fortress of unknown antiquity, and is situated on the top of a hill to the north-east of the town. From its summit a most beautiful view of the town and surrounding country is obtained. No sign of the original fortress exists at the present day, except the deep encircling moats. The fortress is said by some historians to be the oldest in Finland, dating far back into heathen times. It was mentioned in 1327 as a relic of the past. The last remains of the fortress were probably destroyed in the wars with Russia in 1571 and 1590, when the greater part of the town was laid in ashes. The ancient battlements are now guarded by that modern horror—barbed wire, and light wooden bridges are placed across the moats for pedestrians. It was upon these wooded heights that the famous Finnish poet, Walter Runeberg, used to come and seek for inspiration for some of his immortal poems.

If a Finnish child were asked, "For what is Borgå famous?" the answer would be, "It was the home of Walter Runeberg." The memory of his sojourn here is one of the proudest records of the town. The modest one-storied wooden house that was his home for over thirty years is now the property of the town,

and open to all who care to visit this shrine to the memory of a great man.

Everything is left in the house exactly as it was when Runeberg lived there, and the very spirit of the dead master seems to cling to the old-world furniture and fading hangings of other days. Even a stranger must feel a certain solemnity within those walls. All the symbols of a home are there, only life is absent. Surely the ghost of the master must sometimes steal back to the home that has never been dismantled—the home that he loved, and where the genius of his mind gave birth to those beautiful songs that he left as an heirloom to his country.

My next pilgrimage was to that green hill across the river where the people of Borgå sleep their last long sleep. It is in truth a place of rest: a garden of peace, shadowed by watching trees that alone break that majesty of silence when a breeze from the distant fjord stirs their drooping branches above the resting-places of the dead.

Runeberg is buried there, and above his grave a splendid monument of Finnish marble is outlined against the sky.

Just as Vikings were always buried by their followers on the highest eminences to show to all their kingly rank, so the people of Borgå placed the mortal remains of their poet upon the most elevated position they could find. The grave of Runeberg stands alone upon the summit of a little hill, impressive in its simplicity, and worthy to be the shrine of a patriot.

Below that hill, hidden amongst the shadows of the trees, there is another grave—a modest slab

of granite, so unassuming that passers-by would not heed it. To a stranger the simple inscription, "Eugene Schauman d. 16th June 1904," would convey nothing. But few Finnish hearts have failed to beat the quicker as they have looked down on that bare sentence, because beneath those printed words there stands out vividly a message in blood—"This man gave his life for his country." Eugene Schauman will be known to posterity as the William Tell of Finland, who shot his country's tyrant, General Bobrikoff, and then took his own life. As yet the deed is so recent that the name of Eugene Schauman is only whispered, but little children lay a flower on his grave when the shadows fall and the sun sinks behind the old homes of Borga.

The bridge that spans the river below the cemetery is built of wood, and is a most picturesque adjunct to the scene. The river was crowded that day with immense stacks of floating timber, slowly drifting downwards towards the open water. It was my first glimpse of those countless timber-floats that later were to meet my eyes in every part of my journey through Finland.

The view from the bridge was so delightful that I was only reminded of the passing of time by a word from my long-suffering companion, Colonel de Schulman, who gently hinted that man does not live by sight-seeing alone. We, therefore, wended our way to the Societetshuset, a comfortable old-fashioned hotel, where we obtained a most excellent dinner, served by a particularly attentive Finnish maiden, the happy possessor of the bluest eyes that I have ever seen.

Borgå, by the way, is noted for a special brew of ale, and also a peculiar kind of bun, immemorially known as "Borgå Tippor." These buns have been the delight of children for so many generations past, that the name of their originator is lost in antiquity. Perhaps some heathen housewife of the ancient citadel made them as a surprise for her lord and master.

Before leaving Borgå, I had just time to give a hasty glance over the museum. It has been opened but recently, and contains principally gifts of private donors, consisting chiefly of *objets d'art* and furniture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I shall remember that museum chiefly for two things. First, the famous sledge in which Alexander I. made his imperial progress through Finland a hundred years ago. Time has dealt gently with that historic equipage, and the panels of vivid wool-work that decorate it, and which were worked by the fair hands of Finnish maidens, are still only slightly less florid in their hues than when in their pristine glory. Secondly, the old custodian who refused to take a tip. A Finn's honesty is sometimes almost aggressive.

I must not forget to mention, also, an old blue-and-white willow-pattern dinner-service, lately given to the museum, that I had frequently eaten my dinner off in the days gone by. I immediately recognized it, although I had no previous knowledge that it had been placed there.

That particular dinner-service had only been accounted valuable of late years. When I knew it, it was only considered fit for the nursery and everyday use. It made me feel quite venerable to think that the

plates of my nursery days were now reposing in solemn rows behind large show-cases in a museum. I was glad that fine china had found at last its right place in the world. But I know of many homes in Finland which still have china in everyday use that would create a sensation at Christie's.

How that old Oriental china has got into Finland is more or less a mystery. It can only be surmised that during the many wars in the Middle Ages, it must have crept over the Russian border from Constantinople, or else have been brought over in trading vessels from the East. But I must not induce would-be collectors to go in search of these treasures, which, as a matter of fact, are generally hidden away safely upon unseen shelves. I, myself, found a fine Oriental bowl in an old curiosity shop at Helsingfors during my recent stay there, and I know of another perfect specimen reposing in the centre of Finland (a sufficiently vague address, I hope), which I mean to be mine some day. This bowl is of immense size, thirty inches across, of richly glazed porcelain with a vivid green decoration, and absolutely void of any other colour. The price asked was so high for Finnish currency, 400 marks (£16), that I could do nothing but shake my head and leave it there until hops begin to pay again.

CHAPTER V

A ghost—The first step towards the wilderness—Finnish railways—A Helsingfors belle—A typical scene—A good night's rest—First impressions of Viborg—The sleepiness of the town—Patience required—Viborg Castle—A tempting breakfast—Dazzling sunlight—The great explosion—Black magic—Ancient city walls—Catholic times—A conversation with Leo XIII.—Godfearing peasants—Modern town—Couronne d'Anne—The park of Papula—A beautiful country seat—The majesty of Nature—A poet—The rest of Monrepos—Queen Olga of Greece.

A GHOST followed me from old Borgå—the ghost of peace. The turmoil of Helsingfors, the sound of music, the noise of the trams, the incessant throb of life, gave me a longing to escape. That throb of life annoyed me; I had not come to Finland to discover a very good substitute for an ordinary continental town. The evening I returned from Borgå, I found a whole pack of invitations and visiting cards arranged carefully on the writing-table of my sitting-room. I pushed them aside in a heap, and grasped the telephone receiver firmly in my hand. No writing-table that respects itself is without a telephone in a Helsingfors hotel. I loathe these machines as a rule, but just then I felt quite friendly towards that particular one. "Reserve me a sleeper to Viborg to-morrow evening," I said quickly. "Yes, sir," my friend the head-porter replied affably.

The news of a departing guest always ensures a spirit of kindness on the part of a head-porter, whether it is in England or on the borders of the polar circle. I am sure that the porter could not have felt a more pleasurable sensation than myself. Also at the back of my mind, I felt I was acting in a Spartan spirit. The journey before me was one that I knew was lacking in many of the everyday comforts of life. It was more or less going forth into the wilderness. However, the knowledge that I found honey, and plenty of it, will, I hope, inspire others to follow in my footsteps.

But travelling has of late years so increased in comfort that a traveller need only look at the wilderness in a series of wonderful pictures, that come and go with such bewildering diversity and rapidity, that he can believe the largest bioscope of the world is being manipulated for his benefit.

Delightful lake steamers are found all over Finland, furnished usually with comfortable wicker deck-chairs in which one can laze and revel in the scenery. Too much of a good thing is tiring, however, and it is a boon that one may shut one's eyes during the seven hours' journey between Helsingfors and Viborg.

The best train to Viborg is the St. Petersburg express, which leaves the capital every evening at eleven p.m., reaching Viborg at six a.m., and the Russian capital three hours later. The railways of Finland belong to the State, and are excellently managed. If they are slow, according to English ideas of speed, they make up for it by their fine cars and good sleeping accommodation. The departure

of the St. Petersburg express is quite a feature in the daily routine of Helsingfors.

It is the one and only occasion on which the station wakes up. It wakes up like a person who has overslept himself, with rather a forced air of not having been to sleep at all—only dozing—and who becomes in consequence so painfully wide-awake that others may almost wish him asleep again. Finnish people, when they travel, like to be made a fuss about. The length of the journey is more or less immaterial. Every one must collect as many friends as he or she can muster to wish them a last good-bye or a first greeting. A stranger going by that train will begin to wonder whether so many people can find places. He need not feel alarmed, for at least three parts of the crowd are there to bid some traveller good-bye.

A young lady who enjoys any popularity at all has the so-called "time of her life," when she starts on her first journey abroad. All the swains that adore her, and many who don't but who wish to be in the fashion, bring her sprays of flowers, which are literally pinned all over her, until she resembles a flower-bed more than a young woman. The overflow of flowers is piled up in her arms, and the last glimpse of her is standing on the outside platform of her car, smiling and bowing amongst flowers as the train glides slowly out of the station. Such a sight would bring a crowd at Victoria Station, but in Helsingfors the rest of the world takes no notice.

During the summer, naturally, there are less people to see you off than in the season; yet the

evening I left for Viborg there was quite a considerable crowd. I arrived rather late; the first bell had already rung—in Finland a train always notifies its departure by two bells, to warn travellers to take their places. After the second bell, only a second's grace is allowed, and a would-be traveller has to jump in pretty sharp or be left behind. My last impression of Helsingfors was a vision of waving handkerchiefs and the expressionless faces of the two Russian gendarmes in their gaudy uniforms, who always appear like clockwork on the platform as the train steams out. Those two gendarmes are almost the only visible sign by which a stranger could gather that Finland belongs to the border country.

The gentle motion of Finnish railways is most conducive to sleep, and I only woke when the attendant abruptly aroused me from my dreams by calling out: "Viborg in twenty minutes." Six o'clock in the morning, after a night's journey in the train, would make Paradise look at a disadvantage. I must own that Viborg gave me the impression of being the most dismal town that I had ever come across. It had a peculiarly lifeless air. A few sleepy porters stared in a vacant way at the one or two passengers who alighted as if they must be somewhat devoid of reason for getting out there. I was glad to see that I had some companions in my madness, otherwise I think I should have boarded the train again, only to escape from that great empty platform.

Viborg is a shade less dismal outside the station than within. I passed hastily through the buffet, that had the stale atmosphere of meals of yesterday.

However, coffee would have been served to a traveller, and I strongly advise future travellers to take the chance, and make hay while the sun shines. The real sun was high in the heavens, but the inhabitants of Viborg were absolutely and entirely oblivious of it. It might have been two a.m. by the appearance of the town. Viborg was sleeping. Not a person was visible in the streets. Shutters and blinds were tightly closed. The very horse of the most dilapidated cab I ever got into was asleep. The driver hardly made a pretence to open his eyes. I hoped that at the hotel things would be different; the name *Societetshuset* sounded at least pleasant and familiar. But, alas! my hopes were not realized. The half-dressed individual who opened the door only nodded in the affirmative when I asked if I could have a room. He silently shouldered my bag, and conducted me up two flights of stairs with the muffled tread of some one anxious not to disturb the night's rest of those fortunate beings who were asleep. He deposited my bag with a groan on the table of a large room, furnished with dusty-looking red velvet armchairs. "Can I have hot water and some coffee?" I said meekly. "The chambermaid is on duty at eight o'clock, and the kitchens are open at 8.30," he replied briefly. Then he strode silently out of the room, and closed the door. I went to the windows and stared out. The street also looked hopelessly uninteresting, and not a person was as yet about. Then suddenly two friendly little birds on the opposite roof began to sing—a song of rejoicing. I have never heard such happy birds, and in a moment they made Viborg seem a different place.

Viborg is the third largest town of Finland, and comes next to Åbo in respect of historic associations. It has existed over six centuries, and has had more than its share of fire and sword. It is difficult to-day to conjure up that stormy past, and would be well-nigh impossible but for the splendid old Castle of Viborg, built in 1203, which still raises its head in grim strength above the modern houses of cards built in our day. It has resisted the ravages of countless enemies. Fire has leapt out from its towers. Cannon balls have indented its walls. Yet not only war has been its lot. High revels have been held there, and fair women have looked out upon the waves that still play upon the outer walls of the old castle, which is built on a small island amidst the waters of the Viborg fjord. In their day the bridge that now connects the castle with the mainland did not exist.

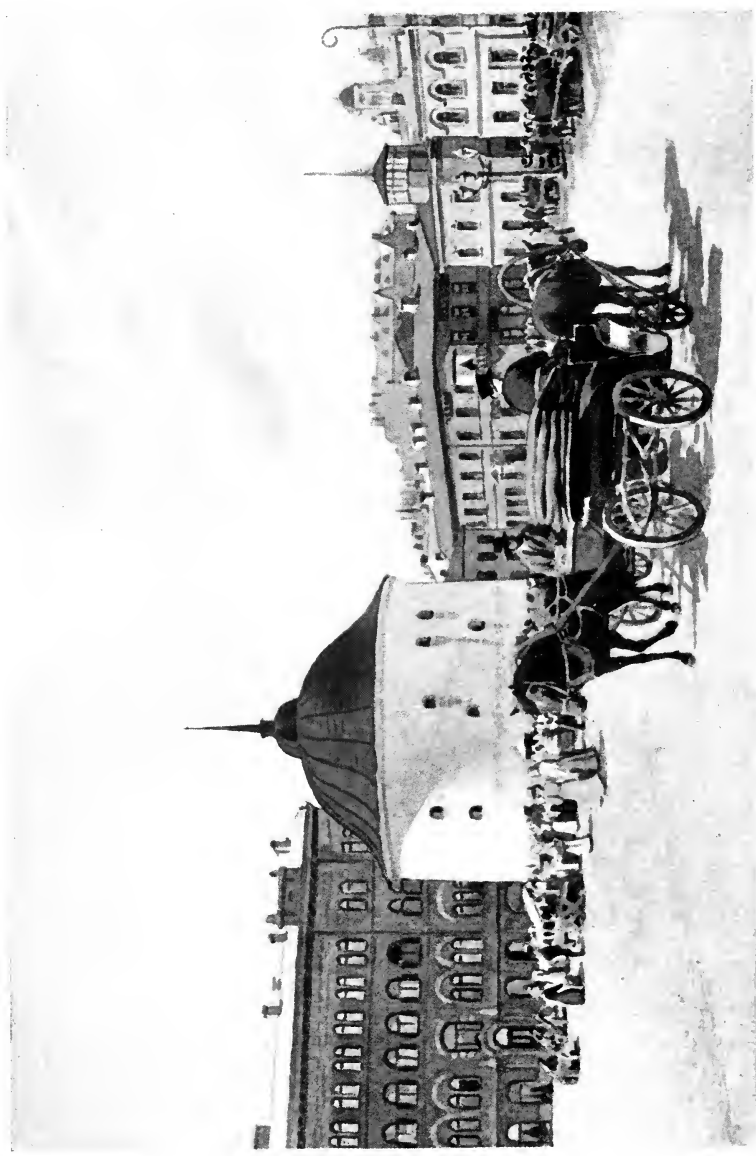
When I looked upon the castle, the sun was shining direct upon it, and the water fairly blazed. I should like every one to have a first view of it as I did in a circle of light. I was by this time in a contented frame of mind. The hotel kitchens of the Societetshuset had opened at 8.30, and at 8.45 I revelled in the best coffee I had ever tasted, and the most delicious of bread, a speciality of Viborg called "Viborg kringla," baked on straw, which gives it a peculiar flavour not possessed by any other bread that I know of. Such bread and such sunlight should make any one happy!

It was in the Middle Ages—above all, during the fifteenth century—that Viborg Castle rose to the zenith of its fame. The governors of the castle

had enormous power, amounting almost to kingly state. During the occupation of Karl Knutson Bonde, in 1448, a brilliant court was held at Viborg, and he sailed to Stockholm to pay homage to his king with a suite of no less than eight hundred knights. A century earlier, in 1369, that powerful knight, Carl Ulfson Sparre, was made governor of Viborg, at the advanced age of seventy-nine, and was even permitted to ennoble his subjects. But the days of peace and plenty were few and far between, compared with the days of hunger and suspense when the red torch of battle has lit up its naked walls.

Many sieges has the old castle withstood, the most memorable being the famous "Viborgska Smällen"—the Viborg explosion—on November 30, 1495, when Ivan Wasiljevitsch, a Russian general, besieged the castle with an army of sixty thousand men. The defenders were so few that the governor, General Posse, sought their safety by undermining one of the castle towers, and commanded his scanty garrison, said to consist of twenty men, to the refuge of one of the lower dungeons, while one old man volunteered to give his life, and set fire to the mine.

The effect of this strategy was wonderful. The tower fell unexpectedly upon the heads of the besiegers, and an enormous number were killed and wounded. This disaster completely disorganized the rest of the army, which fled as one man, thinking they were pursued by legions of the victorious Finns. General Posse was ill requited for this startling victory, for it was declared that



VIBORG

he had obtained it by the powers of black magic. It was whispered that he had cooked in a large copper saucepan, frogs, serpents, quicksilver, and chalk, and with these ingredients had set fire to the tower. This famous saucepan is still kept at the castle. The castle is now used as the headquarters of the Russian troops at Viborg; it is difficult for strangers to obtain permission to see the interior.

Many tales are told of Posse's partnership with the devil. One that always interested me as a child was that when an enemy approached, he alone would mount on the highest rampart of the castle, armed only with a large bag of feathers, which he would shake out to the wind, whereupon each feather became transformed into a fully armed soldier.

Formerly Viborg was surrounded with strongly fortified walls, which now for the greater part have been destroyed, although parts are still seen. The oldest remnant, a curiously built grey stone tower, probably a corner turret of the ancient wall, now stands forlornly in the centre of the principal market-place. One wonders why and wherefore it has been spared. This tower is the centre of old Viborg.

Old Viborg is fast disappearing, yet the very names of the streets speak of the past—such as "The Black Friars' Street" and "The Grey Friars' Street," which serve to remind us of the old Catholic days when Viborg possessed the first Dominican monastery built in Finland in 1318. The present Lutheran church, built in 1481, once belonged to a rich order of Franciscans, who in their day made Viborg Church almost as famous as Åbo Cathedral

for the pomp and ritual of their services, as well as for their learning and good works.

Finland has to thank Catholicism for many good gifts, sown so broadcast that even in our day the people reap the benefit of them. The year before the late Pope, Leo XIII., died, I happened to be in Rome, and had the honour of a private audience with him. He was much interested about Finland, and asked me several questions with that keen scholarly insight for which he was so remarkable. "A clever race, and yet why did they 'secede from the old faith?" he said musingly. "Blame not the people, your Holiness," I answered, "but that mischievous Martin Luther."

I remembered that conversation several times during my wanderings through Finland. Nearly every church, particularly in the less frequented parts, owes its existence to the old Catholic days, and for the greater part the interiors are almost untouched, and have a wealth of ornaments and crucifixes, that are curiously out of place in a Lutheran place of worship. So much so that a stranger would scarcely realize that the influence of that strange man who upheaved almost the half of Europe had reached this distant land. Personally, I believe the Finns are such a marvellously conservative race that they have not realized yet that they have been "converted"! They still call their services "High" or "Low" Mass. The peasant women, moreover, always go to church in black, and have to inscribe their names some time before attending the Sacrament. All of which customs date back to a period long before Luther existed.

The peasants of Finland are still deeply God-fearing and religious, unlike the so-called upper and educated classes, who rarely, if ever, attend any religious service, and are often openly atheistical in their tendencies.

Viborg, for all its old historic memories, gives the impression of a modern town. The streets, except in this small quarter of it which I have mentioned, are wide and straight. The open squares are ugly. The buildings are new, but endeavour to look imposing. There is one spot which leaves a pleasant remembrance, and that is St. Anne's Hill, from which one can view the town to advantage. An open-air restaurant has been built on the summit, and on summer evenings it is much frequented by the inhabitants of Viborg. A military band usually plays in the summer evenings, if the weather permits. This part of the town is on the opposite side of the bay, and is connected with the old town by a bridge called the Åbo Bridge. It possesses an old fort, founded by Peter the Great, and enlarged afterwards by the Empress Anne, who built also the fortified walls which surround it, which she named the "Couronne d'Anne." These fortifications are now fallen into disuse, and the old walls are only used as a delightful promenade.

There are two excursions within a short distance of the town which no one who visits Viborg ought to miss. One is a drive to Papulabärg, a wooded height with a fine park, which can be reached either by steamer or by carriage. Perhaps it is best to go by water. The other excursion is to one of the most famed homes of Finland—the beautiful country seat

of Monrepos, belonging to Baron von Nicolay. The park is open to the public every day in the week except Tuesday and Friday. A small entrance fee (fourpence) is levied for the poor of the town; this is paid at the lodge of the principal entrance. I had often heard of its charms, but this was the first time I had been able to visit it.

The approach from Viborg is uninteresting, but once within the park gates, you realize that Monrepos is one of the most beautiful spots upon God's earth.

Riches and love have been showered on it. Every height has its miniature temple; every nook and corner has its rustic seat. And yet the impossible has been achieved—art has not been allowed to spoil the solemnity of the rugged granite cliffs that descend in sheer precipices into the wide sun-swept fjord. The giant trees, survivors from a primeval forest, shade broad gravel paths that diverge from point to point, like the veins of a leaf, leading you from height to height, from valley to valley, from bridge to bridge; spanning blue bays on whose motionless surface water-lilies rest like flakes of snow. Monrepos is Finland at her noblest: Finland in her poverty, if what you seek be the glowing colours of the South; Finland in her wealth, if you have the eye to see and the heart to understand the subtle, mysterious hues of the far North. To all the troubled and weary, I would say—Come and be soothed by the peace and loveliness of Monrepos!

The present owner of this earthly paradise is a bachelor, and is a benefactor in many ways to the town of Viborg. The estates first came into

the hands of the Nicolay family in 1811, when Baron Ludvig Henrik Nicolay bought the estate. He wrote some charming verses describing his country home. These were published after his death by his son, Baron Paul Nicolay, Russian Ambassador at Copenhagen, together with twelve water-colour sketches of the best-known views of the famous park.

Many people of note have visited Monrepos. This year, Queen Olga of Greece stayed there for some weeks—a queen, perhaps, who rejoices in the most devoted friends in the world and of whom only good is spoken. The mansion is built in the style common to the latter part of the eighteenth century, surrounded by graduated terrace walks and wide flights of stone steps that lead down to the edge of the water.

CHAPTER VI

The imprisoned waters of Finland—General von Rosenkampp—The completion of the Saima Canal—My prospective trip—Departure from Viborg—A Russian victory—Delightful suburbs—Juustila—Exquisite scenery—Three months' holiday—Excellence of education—The spell of the North—New Finland and old Finland—A silver ribbon—Where the fairies dance—The first lock—Typical bargemen—A well-known ballad—The fight between Neptune and Vulcan—Wild duck—An English cottage—A bad dinner—An old-world chariot—The road through the forest—A halting-place—First thunder of Imatra—A London hotel in the wilderness.

FOR thousands of years the interior of Finland was cut off from the outer world. The people who dwelt upon the shores of her inland seas loved them and have sung of them for centuries. Their songs are filled with the haunting melancholy natural to the hearts of an imprisoned people. To break their bonds seemed impossible. Mountains would have to be burst asunder, rivers wrested out of their courses, lakes lowered or emptied, morasses dug out, forests cut down. For centuries mankind quailed before the magnitude of such a task, but at last it has been accomplished! The construction of the Saima Canal was one of the most brilliant feats of engineering in the history of the world. We can hardly realize the colossal nature of

such a work, or understand what its completion meant to Finland. It quickened hundreds of desolate districts into new life. It brought wealth and power to thousands, and an increase of prosperity to every peasant in the land. It was a marvellous example of man's triumph over Nature.

The immense expanse of inland waters known as Saima, (from which the canal takes its name) is two hundred and twenty-five feet above the level of the sea, into which the canal empties itself. The canal is forty-seven miles in length, has twenty-eight locks, numerous sluices, and one aqueduct, where the waters of Sockuanjoki Lake are led under the bottom of the canal, which is walled in throughout its course with solid blocks of Finnish granite.

The whole cost of this colossal enterprise was estimated at six millions of silver roubles, but the enormous expenditure has long since been repaid a hundred-fold by the impetus it gave to trade. The Emperor Nicolas I. gave his imperial sanction to the undertaking by a special edict, dated September 21, 1844. It was completed in 1856. The construction of it is in a great measure due to the tireless energy of the late General Baron von Rosenkampp, who was Chief of the Water Communications in Finland at that time. Amongst the difficulties that had to be overcome in its construction were great tracts of morass and bog, several miles in length, over which the transport of stones, etc., had to be effected in light trucks run along lines attached to enormous poles, formed of single trunks of trees sunk into the yielding ground. The whole of Finland reveres the memory of the man whose

genius has accomplished so much for her, and the name of General von Rosenkampff will never be forgotten.

After my visit to Monrepos I returned to the red velvet chairs of the hotel, and forgot their discomfort as I sat thinking of the Saima Canal. I had in my hand an old book describing the opening ceremony, which took place just about fifty-one years ago. The author described his first trip up the canal as being like "climbing up a ladder of water that led step by step into fairyland." The enthusiasm of that old scribe infected me, and I was eager to compare my impressions with his.

The Saima steamer leaves Viborg daily at one o'clock in the afternoon, but long before that hour I was comfortably settled on deck.

The wise will follow my example, and by so doing they will obtain an unusually restful wicker-chair, a comfort which only first-comers secure, as the stock is limited owing to the smallness of the deck.

The half-hour's wait, moreover, requires no undue patience, for one cannot fail to be amused at the diverting scenes in the harbour. Different types of people pass and repass on the cobble-stone quays, and, judging from the numerous languages one hears around, Viborg might be a modern Tower of Babel. It reminded me of certain much-frequented places in Switzerland during the height of the season.

The Saima Canal is also the favourite route for tourists going to Imatra, the Niagara of Finland, and the goal of all travellers visiting the country. I was bound for that Mecca, and congratulated myself that I had a room reserved at the hotel at Imatra,





VIBORG CASTLE AND INNER HARBOUR

which, although report said it was the finest hotel in Finland, could surely not accommodate all my fellow passengers.

We started only a few minutes later than the appointed time. The chatter around me increased rather than decreased as we left our moorings. Russian, German, French, and English were predominant; but I think Russian won the palm for copiousness. Close to me were a party of Russian ladies, all wearing immense diamond ear-rings. They had the flashing dark eyes and colourless complexion so characteristic of their race. They all laughed and talked in chorus. I mentally counted the hours before we would reach our destination, and wondered if they would be my companions all the way to Imatra.

We had hardly left the harbour of Viborg before the fjord widened and gave us charming vistas of wooded bays and nooks, each with its gaily painted villa. I breathed again! I had forgotten these summer homes, of Finland. Probably before we entered the Saima Canal half the passengers would have disappeared. I was right in my conjectures. Slowly the many languages melted away, and before the canal was sighted a welcome hush reigned aboard.

Some people think that Juustila, the point where the last stretch of the canal empties itself into the Viborg fjord, is the loveliest spot on the whole course. Others prefer the Rättijärvi end, where passengers for Imatra disembark, to continue their journey by diligence through the intervening forests.

To me it seemed impossible that anything could

surpass the exquisite prettiness of Juustila. I can remember dozens of places on the Continent and elsewhere far surpassing it in grandeur and beauty, but for sheer *prettiness* Juustila stands alone. Its charm defies description.

I regretted that I had no time to get out and spend a night at the inviting little hotel that stands close to the landing-bridge, half hidden amongst the surrounding foliage. It possesses the most tempting-looking verandas, where numerous little tables stood prepared for the expected dinner guests.

Juustila is a favourite excursion from Viborg, and the hotel restaurant is always well patronized during the summer months.

Even the most indifferent fare would taste well in such surroundings, but, as a matter of fact, report says that mine host of the Juustila Hotel is most considerate of his guests and treats them excellently. In close proximity to the hotel are numerous summer villas, mostly rented by Russians from St. Petersburg.

The short distance of Viborg from the Russian capital makes this a very favourite holiday resort with them.

At Juustila passengers going up the canal have to change boats, and walk along a footpath to the steamer waiting above the first lock, which is only used for traffic descending the canal.

The less luggage one takes the better, for a porter is a very rare luxury in Finland, and quite unknown at Juustila. It is best, in any case, to forward all heavy baggage direct by train from Viborg to Imatra, as the diligence has strictly limited space for luggage.

I myself was successful in getting hold of a

small boy to carry my bags—a strong, sturdy little fellow with bare head and naked feet, in age between eight and ten. After ten, boys in Finland are considered capable of working in the fields with their fathers. Finnish children of all classes are free from school during the three summer months, June, July, and August—a holiday to make other children envious; but Finnish children have to make up for it by working specially hard during the remaining nine months of the year. There are no holidays, beyond the actual festivals, at either Christmas or Easter.

The board schools of Finland are models of excellence, and I have often wondered what ordinary little peasant children can do with so much knowledge crammed into their brains.

To begin with, they have to learn their lessons in the two State languages of the country—Swedish and Finnish; a few years back Russian was also compulsory, but now it is optional. In the higher social classes the knowledge of five, or even six, languages is considered of small account.

The Finns, indeed, are alarmingly well educated. In a recent international competition Finland easily won the coveted distinction of having the highest standard of education in the world, even beating the Americans.

Finland is really the most curious mixture of progressiveness and archaism. I must plead guilty to admiring the latter quality the most. It is the old-world charm, the old-world legends, and the old-world manners of Finland that appeal to me. This journey was a search for them, and to modern

Finland I turned a cold shoulder. Very possibly my book will raise the contempt of "Young Finland," a fraternity of both sexes believing in nothing and nobody except themselves.

I remember only a few years ago a traveller telling me that in journeying through the North of Finland, he had come unexpectedly, in a far distant forest, upon a group of old men murmuring some unknown incantation over a fire in the midst of which some skins had been placed. The scene was so curious that he questioned an old man with long, flowing white locks, who was evidently the high priest in the mysterious rite, as to what they were doing. The old man seemed reluctant to answer, but at length he replied, "We believe in a new God, but that is no reason why we should offend the old ones."

Such a scene is possible only in this strange land of blue waters and endless forests, where the spirit of old romance still breathes.

At Juustila, then, we disembarked and changed into the canal steamer. I found a place as far forward as possible so as to obtain a good view of our ascent. I remembered that we had no less than two hundred and twenty-five feet of water to climb before we reached the first bay of the Saima lakes. One thinks of a canal, usually, as a straight, narrow slit of water between flat-lying shores, but the Saima Canal is one of the most beautiful water-roads in the world. It changes its aspect continually, now widening, now narrowing, as it gradually unfolds itself like a silver ribbon thrown with unstudied grace—here between cliffs of granite, dark and mysterious; there through mile after mile of the richest verdure. Then come

exquisite woodland scenes, which fairies must surely haunt in the moonlight, and we pass under long aisles of immense trees, stretching their branches across the channel that separates them, forming a canopy of green above our heads.

Before you have time to take in the beauty of that natural archway the ribbon twists again, and pastures, intersected by ditches aflame with wild flowers blazing in a very flood of sunshine, meet the eye. The canal has enriched these pastures, bringing moisture to the grass and making it almost as green as an English meadow. Cattle graze close to the water's edge, and in the distance the log-built walls of a humble cottage homestead show up against the background of the forest.

The spirit of peace lingers over all, and yet in the midst of that exquisite calm there comes the thought that this great water-way is a fruit of war—an eleven-years' war with Nature: a war that has never ended, and that will last as long as the Saima Canal exists. The cry of the conquered waters comes unexpectedly upon the ear. It sends a thrill through the most phlegmatic pulses as the steamer glides into a kind of cavern, and the massive, ironbound gates through which one enters are slowly closed. The water is black in the shadows of the high walls on either side. All the light and the sunshine seem to have been left behind. Facing us similar gates stand threateningly in our way.

Suddenly an unseen hand pulls away a shutter in the mighty barrier, and through the opening a tongue of water almost like a flame leaps forth. One by one a dozen shutters open and the water dashes

forth from each, in a cascade of foam, surging down upon us.

Our steamer rocks to and fro, and beads of perspiration gather on the brows of the sturdy sailors as they hold on for grim death to the ropes that bind the steamer to the sides of the lock, to steady the vessel in her ascent. The waters sobbed and hissed. At last the tension is lessened, the battle is over, and the water, trembling and moaning, endeavours to calm itself. The sailors relax their hold and throw the ropes up on the banks. Slowly the great doors open and we enter another cavern, if possible deeper and more dismal than the first. It is like going back into prison, and one thought that beyond those doors liberty and sunshine were waiting.

Then I remembered the old book I had been reading, and what it said about the "ladder of water." We had only achieved the first rung. Once again we mount on our bed of foam, but this time when the iron gates open we steam out amongst calm waters beneath an open sky.

A flotilla of barges, carrying immense cargoes of wood to be despatched from Viborg to all parts of the world, were waiting patiently for their turn to descend. The bargemen were splendid types of the Finns of this particular province—fine, well-set-up men, with fair skins and blue eyes. Most of them were wearing their beloved fur caps, regardless of the blazing sun of July that beat upon their heads. Only a few of the men troubled to turn a glance towards us, and that was a swift and fleeting one, as if they had done something they would rather their

mates had not seen. The majority smoked their pipes in blissful unconcern of anything that passed around them. On one barge a man was singing a well-known Finnish ballad. He possessed a good voice, and had evidently an attentive audience around him. This particular province has the reputation of being the most musical in Finland, and it is upon these shores that their ancient runos still are extant, as well as the wealth of folksongs handed down from father to son. Perhaps the best known is the beautiful "Mistäs tulet," or the haunting refrain of "Minum kultani," one of the most touching melodies that have ever been written. Like the old Greek song of Hero and Leander, it has also a tragedy in its heart.

Two lovers had named a trysting-place on one of Saima's thousand islands, known only to themselves. They rowed out by night, guided by the silver rays of the moon. But during their meeting a great storm arose and swept away their boats. Their calls for help were unheard, and some time afterwards they were found dead in each other's arms. It was this ballad that the young bargeman was singing. The passion of the story vibrated in his voice. That he also was a lover was very evident. I hoped his romance would end more happily.

As we sped up that canal I forgot that other world I had come from. This land fascinated me, with its strange blending of new and old. I know of no other country so suggestive of the arena upon which the gods fought giants. There is a legend that it was here that Neptune and Vulcan

fought to gain supremacy. At last they made a treaty, and Neptune received three-quarters of the entire world on condition that henceforth he should control his mighty waves to allow ships to pass across the vast oceans of his kingdom to all parts of the globe, excepting only the imprisoned waters of Saima.

In the middle of these reflections we passed a hayfield, where women and children were tossing the sun-warmed hay with their long wooden pitchforks. A young woman was laughing, and her laugh was so light-hearted and happy that one could not but laugh with her. They all paused at their work and looked with curiosity at the passengers on board. The daughters of Eve are the same all the world over, God bless them!

We seemed to be climbing up that ladder of water swiftly. Sometimes only a single lock barred the way, at other times several in succession. The longest sequence is five, which is higher up the canal after one has reached Rättijärvi, where tourists for Imatra have to disembark. The approach to Rättijärvi is heralded by a lake, with thickets of plumed rushes, and countless wild duck that dived and swam in all directions, quite indifferent to our approach. On the left I noticed a funny old primitive lighthouse; just a conical-shaped box, painted white, surmounted by a stick, on which a small black lantern was fixed. Close to it was a charming cottage, with a prim little garden-path bordered with stocks and sweet peas. That cottage might have been imported from Kent, it was so curiously English in appearance. Some

day when I feel bold enough, I shall make a voyage of discovery through England, and write my impressions down in a foreign language for the Finns perhaps to read.

The wooden landing-bridge of Rättijärvi was all aglow with the rays of the setting sun. From the surrounding forest there came the soft tinkle of cow-bells, and a herd of little Finnish cows, heavy with milk, came into view. The bare-footed milkmaid might almost have timed her appearance for that actual moment. The stage effect could not have been better at "His Majesty's."

The inn at Rättijärvi is close to the shore. I had telephoned from Viborg in the morning to have dinner prepared, for I had been warned that provisions might be short. Even as it was the fare provided required a very hungry man to eat it. In the whole course of my journey through Finland, I never had a worse-cooked or served meal. Perhaps my appetite for this horrible food was unusual, and therefore the charges were also unusual. They were abnormally high, the bill amounting to nearly sixteen marks without wine, a luxury the inn did not rise to.

However, I was not discouraged. If one swallow does not make a summer, then I thought one bad meal should not mar a holiday. Also the prospect of the Imatra hotel, judging from photographs, was distinctly alluring. The diligence was rather behind time. It was due to leave Rättijärvi at seven o'clock, and timed to arrive at Imatra at ten o'clock, but it was past 7.30 by the time we had got a move on. To say our vehicle had come out of the

ark would give an altogether wrong impression, as it must have been quite old-fashioned at that period. It was the oddest and most cumbersome affair on wheels that had ever been invented, being a covered-in box contrivance with a division down the centre and seats *vis-à-vis* to each other. The sides consisted of holland curtains, and the front was boarded up, with two miniature peep-holes cut in the woodwork, which successfully prevented you from getting any view at all, except certain portions of the driver's back.

There was accommodation for twelve inside passengers and one outside by the driver. That coveted place was already occupied when I arrived, so I ensconced myself close to the holland curtain, which I promptly drew aside, and was rewarded by a very decent view. My *vis-à-vis* was a timid little middle-aged Russian lady, who kept her eyes mostly fixed on a large wicker basket which she held on her knees, and which she clutched nervously with two of the smallest hands I ever saw. She was one of those forlorn little women that make one wonder why they have left their homes. All Finnish drivers start and end their journeys with a certain swagger. Our driver cracked his long whip in great style, and our three horses, which were all driven abreast, sprang well up into their collars, and went off at a good swinging pace, the surrounding forest echoing with the sound of the bells on their harness.

As one leaves Rättijärvi the road cuts sharply away from the lake, and goes straight into the heart of the forest. Although the hour was so late, the sun was still well above the horizon, and gave a

wonderful red glow to the motionless firs that stretched away on either side of the road like some great army of giant soldiers. To see a Finnish forest for the first time, with the sun setting over it, is an experience never to be forgotten. It is the solemnity of untouched nature that appeals so strongly to the imagination as well as the continual variations of the scene. Now a patch of wild strawberries, redder than the lips of a Devonshire lass; then a glade open to the sky, where giant fern fronds look like a thousand fans being wafted by unseen hands. Patches of light and air, with the whisper of a hundred brooks falling over gigantic boulders. Carpets of silver and green mosses, made by the setting sun into wonderful mosaics of changing colours. Now and again you hear a distant sound of cow-bells, and in the midst of the great forest a solitary homestead comes into view—poor log-built houses, grey with the passing years, but happy homes for all their poverty. By one cottage flaxen-haired children were standing in the porch, and rushed forward at our approach with baskets made from the bark of trees filled with wild strawberries and raspberries which they disposed of to us for pennies. They ran splendidly, and I remember one quaint little couple, a boy and girl, who kept up half a mile with us without having sold their wares. At last I threw them some coppers, and they tumbled down by the wayside exhausted but happy.

For the first time the little Russian lady addressed me—or, rather, her basket. “Alas, they will become beggars!” she breathed softly, and for one brief moment looked at me disapprovingly.

Once we passed a real village, with at least twelve houses in it. Our driver cracked his whip here, and increased the pace of his horses. Suddenly he cried out, with a voice that would awaken the dead, "The post is coming," and without decreasing the speed, threw into mid-air three letters, which were adroitly caught by an old man, as we dashed by in a cloud of dust. Halfway to Imatra we paused for the first time to change horses. It was only a little clearing in the forest, with a rough open shed in its midst. A herd of cows had been driven in from the forest, and a woman was milking. A pretty lady, one of our passengers, who was called "Baroness" by her companions, offered me a glass of milk with a charming smile. My little Russian lady got into conversation with her, and seemed astonished when the baroness said she was married. "I should never have thought it," she said gently, "for you do look so happy."

There was a whole history in those few words of the little Russian lady.

By the time we had made our second start, twilight had stolen a march on the sun, and the wild flowers that a few moments before were banks of glowing colour, turned to a faded purple. The air was also cooler, and I felt glad of my great-coat. The darkness descended very slowly, and the clear light of a Northern summer night made everything nearly as visible as in the daytime.

We were two miles from our destination, and I was just beginning to feel comfortably tired, when a distant rumble made itself heard.

"Imatra!" every one exclaimed in chorus. With every step the clamour increased. A moan was

THE
CALIFORNIA



carried down to us through the mist. It was as if the forest had become haunted by thousands of unseen spirits. In the darkness one could see nothing, only hear that sad sound. Even the voice of the pretty baroness was at last silent. Suddenly our tired horses dashed round a corner, and we found ourselves in front of a veritable palace, in a blaze of electric light. Porters in livery ran down to help us alight. The contrast of that scene with the dark forest of a moment before was extraordinary. I thought I must be dreaming when a smartly dressed waiter showed me into a bedroom that looked as if it had been spirited over from London or Paris. Then I realized that my senses were being slowly deadened by that roar that never ceased. The room was full of it. I felt I would give anything to escape from it. "Shut the windows," I shouted. "It is only Imatra," the waiter replied reassuringly. "At first it always startles a stranger, but to-morrow, sir, you will not notice it." The architects of that hotel had mercifully put double windows to all the rooms facing the cataracts. So comparative peace made me forget the close proximity of the mighty Imatra, and I slept soundly and dreamt I was still driving in that forest, when the sun awoke me the next morning.

CHAPTER VII

Imatra—The mightiest torrent in Europe—The last of civilization—A first-class restaurant—Woods of perfume—An eighteenth-century book—Bad roads—A willing pony—Varieties of wild flowers—Gigantic forests—A picture of winter—An exile—Sleigh-bells—Two pretty maidens—A typical Finnish cottage—A blue meadow—Chimney-stacks—Tainionkoski—A first impression of a factory—A slaughter-house of trees—The shadows of evening—A breakfast for an epicure—A morning drive—Rural scenery—Haymakers—Valinkoski—Eternal youth—Peace and war—A woman's voice—A charming comedy.

IN the morning sunshine, the voice of Imatra seemed no longer terrible as in the darkness of the night. It was one glorious sustained note that it gave forth as I opened my window, and the sound gradually gained in magnificence as I stepped out of the hotel and drew near to the marvellous spectacle.

The wonder of Imatra grows upon you. The sight of those surging waves, fighting their way through the long narrow passage between those walls of granite, needs to sink into your mind. It is only when you have stood watching some time that you can grasp the grandeur of those foaming billows. At one moment they look like giants wrestling. Now swaying, now lashing each other to gain supremacy! Next moment another wave, a bigger giant, dashes them against the jagged



SAIMA CANAL

AMFOLIO

rocks, then hurls them, crushed and broken, down that terrible ravine.

And so the eternal fight continues. The mighty billows of Imatra rest neither by day nor by night!

Under every aspect Imatra fascinates the onlooker, but in sunlight most of all. The seething waves become golden, and far up one can faintly see the higher stretches of water, gleaming in the sun like a rope of fire.

There is an old Finnish saying: "We have three vast forests, three high mountains, and three mighty waterfalls; but there is only one Imatra."

Some would refuse Imatra the title of a fall, and call it a rapid or cataract. It is true that the Pletschbach Falls in Switzerland are nine hundred and twenty-five feet in height, and that the well-known falls of Schaffhausen are three hundred and forty feet in breadth. It is not the height or breadth, but the tremendous depth of the immense masses of water, dashing at such a mad pace, that forms the majesty of Imatra.

The loudest cry is inaudible across the thunder of those waves, but a letter wrapped round a stone can easily be thrown over them to the opposite bank. I like to think of Imatra, as it was before man discovered it—surging down in its solitude through untold centuries, alone with its strength, alone with the watching forests, alone in the darkness.

The conceit of man is so great that he has tried to improve Imatra. He has built a palatial modern hotel above the foaming depths, made stiff little formal paths along its banks, and then placed tawdry wooden pavilions at various points, from which countless

kodaks can be levelled at it. Nor has he stopped there, for he has swung an ugly suspension bridge across it.

In winter, electric lights of various colours are thrown over the waters, and the visitors watch these artificial illuminations with far greater pleasure than the stars above.

Both in summer and winter, the hotel is crowded with visitors. Numbers come from St. Petersburg, Russians being especially fond of Imatra. A special suite of apartments is always reserved for members of the Imperial family, who often spend a few days there. When I re-entered the hotel I met an old friend. He supposed this was the limit of my journey, but when I told him I intended going as far north as I could during the three weeks at my disposal, he was not only astonished, but concerned. "As you will," he said at length, "but this is the last corner you will find of Europe." I must say "the last corner" was a very comfortable one. Needless to say, my friend was alluding to the creature comforts to be had there, the falls being a secondary consideration to him. The hotel restaurant is first-class, and more than made up for the bad dinner of the previous day. If one has the time to spare, some days may be spent most pleasantly at Imatra. There are several excursions in the neighbourhood. The best known are to Tainionkoski above the falls, and to Vallinkoski below them. Both places are renowned for their lovely scenery.

"If Imatra did not exist, then Vallinkoski would be the most beautiful waterfall in Europe." A traveller wrote these lines on the fly-leaf of a faded vellum-bound

sketch-book, in the last part of the eighteenth century. The book fell into my hands by chance in an old book-shop in Helsingfors. It had evidently been well taken care of and still had a faint aroma of some long-forgotten perfume clinging to the yellow pages. That perfume came again to my remembrance with the breath of some pungent herb that filled the forests around Imatra with an odd sharp sweetness, that I never noticed elsewhere during my travels in Finland. It may have been that a heavy rain-storm that morning had brought out the perfume more than usually. Whatever the cause, the air was delicious. I was undecided whether to go to Tainionkoski or Valinkoski that afternoon. Imatra divides them—from one it gathers the first breath of battle, and the other throws it a mirage of peace that it can never reach.

The sun was red above the forests of Tainionkoski. I am always a follower of the sun, so I told the driver of my droschka to turn his little horse in that direction.

The rain had not improved the roads, and that most willing of beasts, a Finnish pony, found it difficult to plough his way through the heavy mud. The vegetation was most varied. Finland is a storehouse to the botanist. The varieties of flora are as remarkable as their tropical growth. Wild flowers which in other countries are hardly known grow here to such an immense size that one almost thinks they are cultivated. I particularly noticed the wild pink phlox, brilliant in colour, and quite five feet in height. Also the wild ox-eyed daisy, bearing snow-white blooms fully four inches across. The lilies of the valley were just over, but a short while since they

must have scented the forest, judging by the glades of their shining leaves to be seen everywhere. One wonders why this Northern land should be so rich in flora. Flowers are a link that connect all countries. The bluebells of Finland are the bluebells of Scotland, and probably they existed centuries before Finland was called Finland, or Scotland, Scotland.

An Englishman who visits Finland for the first time in summer will get the impression of a country that has practically no night, and a climate several degrees warmer than he is accustomed to—a country that is almost too brilliant with its sparkling waters, verdant foliage, and brilliant midnight skies. But he has no conception of that other Finland—the Finland that is for over seven months frozen to death, and covered with a pall of white, beneath which the wild flowers and blue waters sleep their long winter sleep. The Finn owes many of his characteristics to the awful silence of that endless winter.

I remember talking the other day to a Finn who was exiled during the recent political disturbances. What he missed most in his banishment, he said, was just that marvellous silence.

On a bright sunlit day, sleighing through a forest sparkling with hoar-frost has a fascination of its own. But those sunlit days of winter cannot be relied upon, and often only a few hours of grey daylight will pierce the shadows of night.

As I drove to Tainionkoski, I pictured to myself the utter desolation of winter in that district. Could even the certainty that other summers just as delightful as this make life here bearable? Two pretty little girls, bare-headed and bare-footed, were

THE
MOUNTAIN



IMATRA IN WINTER

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standing in front of a red-painted, log-built cottage. They bobbed and nodded with the utmost friendliness as I drove past. Those little wenches made me feel ashamed. Their smiling faces gave me such a direct answer to my query. With them life was not only bearable but delightful. I should have liked to enter that cottage. A typical Finnish one, the white curtains in the little window were spotlessly clean, and two pots of red geranium stood on the sill. Outside, the inevitable birch tree, that always overshadows a Finnish cottage, glistened with a recent shower. A ridiculous little kitchen garden, about four yards square, contained a dozen white cabbages and a few withered potato plants. It was fenced in with quite a formidable array of wood, painted with the same poppy red as the cottage. Below that modest garden the mighty river Vuoksen was speeding on towards the unseen Imatra, and higher up I could faintly discern the first waves of the Tainionkoski cataracts. After we had passed that red-painted cottage, the road became dull and straight. One redeeming feature was a lovely meadow, literally blue with cornflowers—a pleasant spot of colour to the eye of the tourist, but a bad sight for the farmer who owned it.

Beyond that meadow a thing that I particularly dislike came into view—an object to be found in all countries where man has a foothold. It was peculiarly aggressive in the midst of that forest of wild flowers. "The Thing" was an ordinary clump of factory chimney-stacks. Those chimneys were an absolute eyesore, and emitted curling rings of smoke that spoil the blue of the sky around it. The beauty of

the famous cataract, from which the factory obtains its driving power, was spoilt for me by that shapeless building.

"That is Tainionkoski," my driver remarked proudly, pointing not to the flying waters, but to those objectionable chimney-stacks.

However, I could not give expression to my feelings, particularly as the present manager of the works, Mr. Sascha Etholen, was a personal friend of mine, and had promised to show me round. He owns a charming villa close by that made amends for his ugly chimneys, which I laughingly assured him would be quite attractive—anywhere else in the world.

Tainionkoski possesses one of the largest paper-factories in Finland, as well as a factory for making bobbins. We went to the latter first. Curiously enough, this was the first time in my life that I had visited a factory. It seemed to me a veritable pandemonium. At first I could see nothing but whirling machines and clouds of dust. I was obliged to pretend that I was not quite so ignorant as I looked; but the noise was so deafening that I could not hear a word my friend said, so just nodded my head and kept ejaculating "Really," and "You don't say so." However, when I see a reel of thread again, I shall have a due respect for it.

There are many stages before the completion of a bobbin is an accomplished fact, as my friend Mr. Etholen endeavoured to explain. I have forgotten the intermediary grades, and only remember the first, which consisted of cutting huge tree trunks with great knives as easily as I would cut a cigar, and

the last, which was sorting the different sizes of empty reels, previously to packing them in the empty crates that are exported all over the world. I thought there was a sufficient quantity of reels to supply the world for an indefinite period, and felt nonplussed when I was told that what I saw only represented the output for that day.

One of the largest consumers are Messrs. Coats, of England, for whom thirty thousand gross of reels are manufactured daily.

The paper-mills, which I visited next, seemed, in comparison, quite peaceful. There also the trees of the Finnish forests have to feed those hungry machines. They are thrust into the mouth of a black monster, and come out the other end a mass of pulp. This pulp becomes transformed, after eight hours of various manipulations, into great rolls of hard, brown paper, which is sent to all parts of the globe, including Japan.

When I drove back to Imatra, the sun had set, and the forest had lost the glow of the early afternoon. The trees, to my imagination, had crept closer and closer together, and stood shoulder to shoulder, upright and majestic. Yet, with all their proud demeanour, there was a certain unrest about these old firs, as the shadows of evening hovered above them. I was glad when I entered that most comfortable hotel again. A pleasant hum of voices from the restaurant, and the vision of a graceful woman, dressed in some soft white gown, coming down the wide staircase, gave me the same pleasurable sensation as coming near the fire on a bitterly cold day.

The next morning I awoke with that delightful

feeling of not having to rouse myself until I felt so inclined. I had given myself the luxury of another day at Imatra, a day that I promised myself should be spent as lazily as possible. I would have to make up for it the next morning, as my train for Sordavala left before eight a.m.

I had forgotten all about pulp and reels, and felt as happy as every mortal ought to feel in a comfortable bed with the finest of linen sheets, and the sun creeping through every possible crevice, announcing that, as far as it was concerned, we could rely on a good day. There is nothing so conducive to content as fine weather. I was prepared to enjoy myself thoroughly.

After a "top-hole" breakfast, which consisted of salmon trout and hollandaise sauce, I ordered my equipage of yesterday to be in readiness in half an hour's time.

During the interval, I went and paid homage to the majesty of Imatra. It struck me as even grander than the day before. The waters were, if possible, mightier in their terrific strength, and the spray of the snow-white hills of foam made the overhanging granite cliffs sparkle as if encrusted with countless diamonds. A breeze blew the vapour of the foam into little clouds of spun silver that floated down above the rushing waters.

The half hour had nearly become an hour before I found myself ensconced in my waiting droschka, *en route* for Valinkoski.

The only thing that had been cleaned since yesterday was the face of the stolid driver. I think the little Finnish pony looked more ashamed of

that mud-splashed vehicle than his master did, and turned his blinkerless eyes towards me most apologetically. Then he shook his long unbrushed mane and went off at a sharp trot, as if to show that if the carriage was not clean, at least he was in splendid form.

The road to Valinkoski is a series of abrupt twists and turns, and as up and down as a switchback railway. The scenery was more rural than that of yesterday's drive.

Woodland glades, linked with fields of corn, and stretches of pasture land, passed in succession—a typical Finnish landscape, lit up by the sun and made homelike by the sound of tinkling cow-bells and the music of distant waters.

A party of haymakers were wending their way up a sunny hillside. The men, tall and muscular, went in advance, carrying immense wooden rakes over their shoulders, while the women knitted as they walked slowly behind. It was just the kind of scene an artist is always on the look-out for. The women were all bare-footed, and were dressed in short home-woven cotton gowns, their bent heads covered with handkerchiefs of such gorgeous hues that Joseph's coat of many colours would have looked sombre beside them. The sun was shining obliquely above the picturesque little procession, and across the hill a dark ridge of pines formed an admirable foil to the brilliant light.

Valinkoski is a veritable will-o'-the-wisp, the nearer you think you are to it, the further it seems to recede.

Imatra shows itself at once in all its naked strength ;

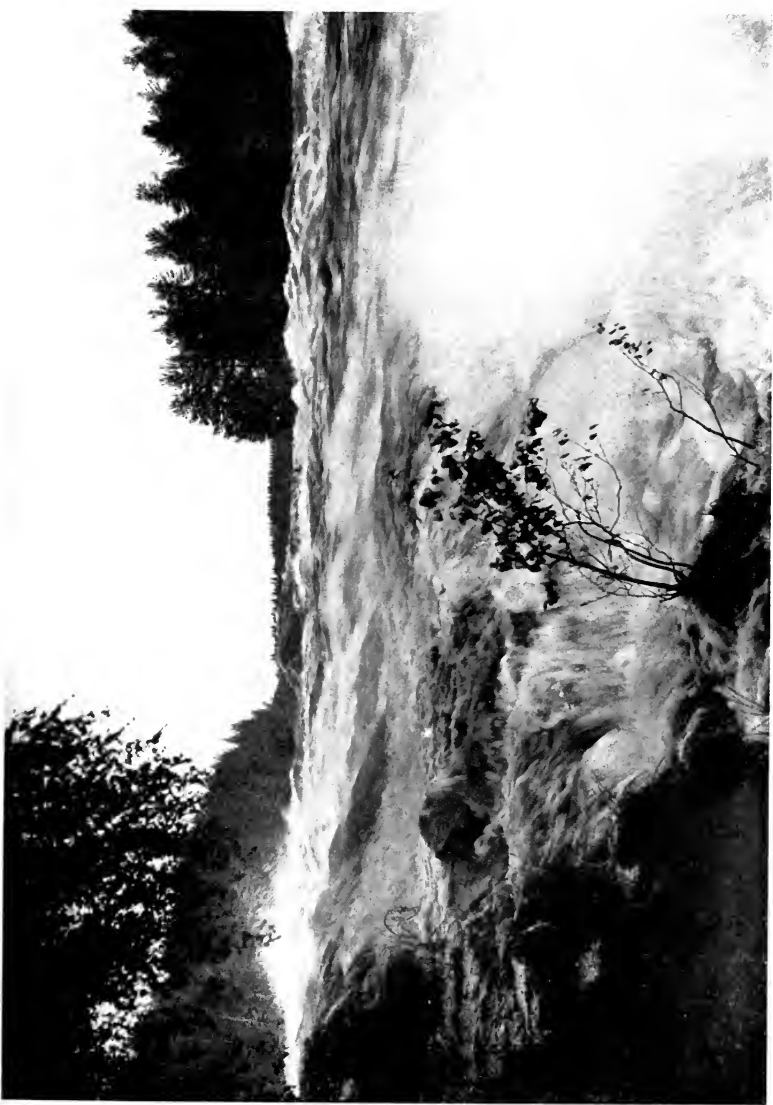
but Valinkoski hides coyly behind a bank of verdant foliage.

I had almost made up my mind that that will-o'-the-wisp would never be caught, when suddenly my mud-bespattered chariot drew up with a jerk that would have sent any one not prepared for the vagaries of a Finnish droschka head foremost into the road. There seemed to me no apparent reason for this unkindly halt, and I thought that something had gone wrong with the very dilapidated harness, which consisted chiefly of odd bits of rope tied round the pony with a liberal supply of knots. Then I saw a small wooden gate by the roadside that led to a narrow footpath which lost itself in a tangle of green birch trees.

"We cannot drive further," my driver vouchsafed with evident disapproval in his voice. "That path leads down to the falls." He threw his reins across his pony's back, folded his arms in a Napoleonic attitude, and promptly fell asleep. The little horse let his head fall so low that I did not doubt he was following his master's example.

The path pointed out to me descended in steep curves towards the shore. About halfway down, the first glimpse of Valinkoski is obtained—a gleam of dancing waters sparkling in the sunlight and leaping over huge rocks of granite in their midst. To see Valinkoski to its best advantage, you must go right down to the shore and look up and watch the waves come tumbling down. I agree with that traveller who visited it in the eighteenth century, and said that if Imatra did not exist Valinkoski would be the most beautiful waterfall in Europe.

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VALINKOSKI FALLS

THE GREAT
MOUNTAIN

The entire panorama is as perfect as anything can be in the world. There are no straight lines visible, and the width of the water in some places is so extensive that one cannot see distinctly the opposite shore. Some call Valinkoski the dying struggle of Imatra, but to me it gave more the impression of new-born life. There is nothing death-like about those singing waves. They seem like the embodiment of eternal youth, as they come curving round that oblong island set in the midst of the waters like an oasis in the desert. Without that island, Valinkoski would lose half its charm. It separates the smooth from the rough waters, as a shepherd would his sheep from his goats. Glorious waves of foam rushed past so close to where I was standing that the spray touched my face, yet on the other side of the island the water was as calm as a lake. To any one who has not seen it, it must appear an impossible freak of Nature. But the fact remains that on one side those waves would crush the strongest man to pieces in a moment, while on the other a little girl could row up the stream.

Valinkoski was radiant the day I saw it.

Looking down the cataract one could see the current gradually narrow into a thread of foam until in the far distance it broke into countless specks, that rested on the motionless surface of the river like white water-lilies, that floated away towards the mists of the distant clouds, the strongholds of the banished gods, that still linger by the waves of beautiful Valinkoski.

My thoughts were brought earthwards by a woman's voice coming laughingly down the winding

path towards me. I recognized the voice before I saw the owner. It belonged to the pretty baroness, who had so kindly offered me the milk during our halt in the forest. She was accompanied by the same attentive cavalier, and a tall English miss, who was armed with the inevitable kodak. The English miss immediately set to work, and levelled her machine at the waters. But the baroness astounded me greatly by seating herself on a rock with her back to the view, and promptly beginning to flirt most openly with her attentive cavalier, who had no eyes except for his little butterfly companion. It was a delightful bit of comedy, and made me wonder whether, if I were in his shoes, I would have the same impression of Valinkoski. I carefully felt that my tie was straight before I climbed up the steep hill towards my waiting droschka, but the baroness did not recognize me, and I felt distinctly aggrieved. She was so occupied, indeed, that she never even looked up. That was my only consolation.

CHAPTER VIII

A fashionable meeting-place — Characteristic types — Budding Socialists—The comfort of Finnish trains—A hermit's paradise—A boon to travellers—The cradle of lost traditions—The song of a people—A dream fulfilled—Elias Lönnrot—Kalevala, the jewel of Finland—The old runos—Music of many waters—The harp of the eternal singer—A nation that has remembered—The passing of Vainamoinen—Patriotism of Finns—Sordavala—A demure town—A dear old lady—Modest exterior of hotel—A surprise—A public park—The song festival—An excursion on Lake Ladoga—A barge load of furniture—Italian scenery—A study in grey—Departure of the friendly family—A glimpse of Valamo—Two misfortunes—A happy ending.

A COUNTRY railway station in Finland is the fashionable rendezvous of the neighbourhood. Particularly on a Sunday, when, on the arrival or departure of a train, the platform reminds one of a massed choir at the Albert Hall—the women to the left and the men to the right. The sexes keep most rigorously divided, and a young man talking to a young woman is an unheard-of proceeding in public. On a Sunday the women discard their coloured kerchiefs, and for the most part cover their heads in sober black silk shawls, that generally have been handed down from mother to daughter for generations. The morning I left Imatra happened to be a Sunday, and when I arrived at the railway station, although the hour was early, quite an assembly had

already gathered. Several of the women had prayer-books in their hands, wrapped up in a spotless white handkerchief.

The men appeared less at their ease than the women, and seemed uncomfortably conscious of their Sunday clothes, and frightened of the furtive glances thrown at them by the fair sex. One young man, evidently the buck of the neighbourhood, wore a tightly fitting green velveteen suit with silver buttons, and a large black slouch hat, pushed well back over his fair hair. Near him I noticed a very old man with long grey locks, who looked like some old heathen chieftain.

The strength of that old face was remarkable, as well as the dignity of his whole bearing. If ever any man possessed kingly blood in his veins, that old peasant did. He was a remnant of that proud race of old Finns, that the present generation in the towns are trying to forget.

Woe to the present puny race that disgraces the memory of such forefathers, who fought with the strength of their torrents when their country called, and who would have despised all the petty strifes and foolish "hustle" of this twentieth century! Socialism is bad enough anywhere, but in this land where every lake and forest is impregnated with old traditions, it is a sin.

As our train moved slowly out of the station, the thunder of Imatra sounded menacingly to my ears.

The journey between Imatra and Sordavala is quite a small affair, as we were due to arrive there at one o'clock.

Trains in Finland are like the tortoise, slow but

sure. They are rarely behind time, and just as rarely exceed a certain speed.

There is something soothing and restful about a Finnish train. The stops are few and far between, the motion very gentle.

It is from the windows of a railway carriage that one first realizes how vast Finland is, and how very thinly populated most districts are. The train passes through immense tracts of uncultivated land, past wide lakes, upon whose shores probably no man has ever lived. It is beautiful but desolate.

If any one has a desire for loneliness, he may find it in a rich measure in Finland. There are thousands of enchanting bays and forests, teeming with game and wild fruits that are practically unknown. Personally I love my fellow-beings, or at all events try to, and a veritable paradise under such conditions would have no charm for me.

The passing glimpses I obtained from Finnish railways of the wilderness was quite sufficient to satisfy any latent longings I had for solitude. All tourists owe a debt of gratitude to the State (to whom all the railways of Finland belong) for the picturesque routes they selected for their lines, and for the consideration they have taken for the comfort of passengers; especially for the excellent meals which they serve at their little stations. By a kindly forethought, the veriest ignoramus of languages can soon satisfy himself when and where he will get the next opportunity of refreshing the inner man. All you have to do is to glance down the time-table, and at every halt where food is served you will see a miniature sketch of a knife and fork.

This corner of Finland, known as Karelen, that we were then passing through, is one of the most thinly populated provinces in Finland. It is still a home of ancient customs.

By the lonely shores of Karelen the Goddess of Music still plays upon the harp of Nature—the harp that gave birth to the old runos that were carried in the hearts of a people for endless centuries. Long centuries before the star of Bethlehem glimmered above the forests of Finland, the songs of Vainamoinen were born—Vainamoinen, the hero of a thousand songs, that half-man and half-god, whose spirit, wrapped in clouds of mysticism, has been kept alive by the veneration of a people: a mystic faith that has so wonderfully survived the iron wheels of time.

Through countless centuries the Finnish people have sung of him—not heedlessly or mirthfully; not the song of light measure that youth inspires. The song of Kalevala, the great epic poem of Finland, is more the ripe fruit of age.

The young listen as the old murmur it in slow cadence when the winter draws them round the fire of their humble homesteads. The wood burns, and as the sparks fly out on the frozen world, each leaping flame is the beat of a human heart.

The flame of the fire passes out to the night, but the flame ignited in those living hearts is seared deeply in the youth that listens. When their life's eventide is falling, those words, entwined like ivy on their memories, will be sung in like manner to their children's children. So the generations have kept alive the song of Vainamoinen, each calling out

to the living to "Remember," as it has passed through the portals of the unknown.

To us in the hurry of modern life the very conception of such a thing is impossible. One would think that some link must have been lost, but that strange people held on to the heritage of their race. They possessed no aids that we have. Writing or reading was unknown to them. They could listen, and they could remember.

And with those two resources they managed to keep alive the sacred fire of their ancient runos.

Not only Finland but the entire world ought to be grateful to that man, Elias Lönnrot, who, some fifty years ago, collected from the mouths of the people that wonderful national song.

The final edition of his great work was brought out in 1849, consisting of fifty cantos and 22,800 lines.

Lönnrot found again the broken strings of Vainamoinen's lyre, who culled his immortal songs "from the plumes of the pine trees," "the winds of the woods," and "the music of many waters."

This traditional poetry of the Finns is the outcome of solitude; a race that has been isolated for centuries amongst hills and forests. The intense love of Nature that the Finn possesses is strikingly conveyed in the epic itself.

In one canto the singer prefaces his song by saying, "My songs are my learning, my verses my goods, from the roads did I dig them, from the green bows did I pluck them, I wrenched them from the heather plants. Up from the honey mounds, across the golden hillocks, songs did the wind waft

me, the air cradled them by hundreds, verses surged around me, sayings rained down like water. . . . ”

Kalevala is the blending of poetry and myth. It is a voice of a people speaking through the centuries, dating far back to ancient pagan times.

Vainamoinen the eternal singer was born of the daughter of the air. For thirty-four years he was imprisoned within his mother. Then at last he forced a passage through her side and fell headlong into the sea. Here he wandered for eight years until he came to a shore without trees and without name.

After some years he thought of planting trees, and called upon Sampsa, the son of the field, to sow plants and trees of every kind. These all sprang up and grew, except the oak, the tree of God. Vainamoinen, enraged at this, called upon five sea-maidens to mow and set fire to all the vegetation.

Then, beneath the ashes, there sprang up the tree of God, a beautiful oak that grew until it touched the sky.

Canto succeeds canto with a wealth of lyrical imagination that fascinates the reader.

The love-song of Aino, the beautiful maiden who was forced into marriage with an old man and who sought death as her deliverer, is one of the most touching love-songs that have ever been written. At times the runo becomes like a wide calm lake encircled in the arms of peace. Then suddenly Vainamoinen strikes the strings of his lyre, and line by line the power increases.

The spirit of Vainamoinen still lingers upon these shores, where he once sang his immortal songs.



THREE SCENES FROM KALEVALA
BY GALLIEN

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE

Then squirrels, lynxes, elks, wolves, bears, and every animal of the forest came out to hear him. The god Tapio himself, lord of the wood, and his austere spouse listened intently from the tops of the trees. And in dense clouds birds of every kind flew towards the singer, from the eagle to the lark, from the swan to the duck. The fairest virgins of the air listened in ecstasy to him, some seated on the rainbow, and some on purple clouds. Innumerable shoals of fish, large and small, emerged from the waters, to give ear to his song. The virgins of the water let their golden combs and silver brushes fall in their transport. And all human beings, old men and children, brides and bridegrooms, girls and boys, young maidens and matrons, shed tears of tenderness as they listened.

At last even Vainamoinen the eternal singer was so touched at the sweetness of his own melody that tears ran down his face, fell slowly to the earth, and rolled to the bottom of the sea. Vainamoinen offered valuable gifts to any one who would bring them back to him. Many tried and did not succeed. Then the little blue duck came, dived down into the clear water, and found the tears of Vainamoinen. They were no longer tears, however, but great lustrous pearls.

The closing lines of this unique song of the people is contemporaneous with the first dawn of Christendom, and in them we see Vainamoinen, old and humbled, sailing away to the far-off horizon, to wait until his time came round again—until the day should dawn when Suomi, the beautiful country of Finland, would welcome him once more. But his lyre he left to his beloved fatherland, and his solemn

songs he gave to his children, the Finnish race, to be kept by them sacred for ever.

That this handful of people should have guarded their trust is an honour to them. It makes other nations understand why the Finns have during late years fought with such tenacity for their rights.

No Finn can tolerate even the idea of being incorporated with another race. The Finns are nowadays as much a people to themselves as they were in the days when Vainamoinen called them his children. For centuries other nations have fought over them, fire and sword have harrowed their land, pestilences have hewn them down, poverty has bent them low in anguish, but nothing has ever had the power to break their endurance.

This keen desire of keeping themselves apart has in a way alienated Finland from the rest of the world. Even in this twentieth century how little it is known! Strangely little when one remembers the exceptional charms of the land and the open-hearted hospitality and kindly manner of its people.

But I am digressing. So far I was only within half an hour of Sordavala, the most easterly town in Finland, situated on the north shores of Lake Ladoga. The town itself has no especial historic interest. It was founded in the year 1643, and during the remainder of that century it had a flourishing free trade with Sweden. Its principal exports were cereals and tobacco. However, this period in the prosperity of Sordavala was not of long endurance, because in 1705, during the outbreak of war with Russia, the town was completely destroyed by the Russians, and since that

date it has never occupied the same position it had before.

The wave of incoming civilization and culture that burst over Finland during the middle of the nineteenth century did not touch this isolated town. It was only owing to the generosity of a wealthy citizen, Mr. H. Hallonblad, that the first seminary for the education of board school teachers was founded in the year 1880. This, together with the opening of the railway, which took place in 1892, gave a new impetus to the life of the town.

Since then Sordavala has made great strides forward, and it now possesses several other schools and no less than five banks, which, considering that the inhabitants numbered only 2200 in 1905, shows a considerable amount of prosperity for its size.

Finnish people laid the ground-plans of their towns with such reckless extravagance in space, that any one would give them the credit of owning at least four times the number of inhabitants that they really possess.

We arrived at Sordavala punctually to the moment. I found a very dilapidated droschka waiting outside the station (which, by the way, is some way from the town), and promptly placed my luggage therein. The magic word "Societetshuset" acted here as elsewhere, and we went off at a rattle in a cloud of dust down a long steep hill to the right. The road was sorely in need of repair, judging from the astonishing bumps which must have dislocated any ordinary wheels, but to which a Finnish cab seems impervious. It was quite a relief to come into comparatively smooth waters again, as we turned off that road and

saw the town of Sordavala outlined against a hill, with an enchanting peep of a bay of Lake Ladoga, upon whose curved shores the low wooden houses of Sordavala spread themselves like the tail of a peacock, pruning itself in the sunshine.

Very soon we came right upon the peacock, which at closer quarters turned out to be the primmest, cleanest little town I ever saw, with wide cobblestone streets bordered on either side with one-storied wooden houses, each one separate from its neighbour. Their blinds were all down on a level, and most of them possessed a small slanting looking-glass attached to the outside frame of a window, enabling the inmates to see who passed up the street without being seen themselves.

I only saw one pedestrian coming up the wide street. She was a dear old lady with white ringlets and a bonnet with a fall, and she looked just as prim and demure as the houses. I thought she looked rather scared as her eyes caught mine, and she hastily dropped them downwards. Perhaps it was not quite the proper thing for a lady to be seen walking about the streets of Sordavala. All the same, I am sure that dear old lady lost no time in telling her neighbours that a stranger had arrived in their midst. I was beginning to wonder where the Societetshuset could be, when we suddenly turned into the courtyard of one of the one-storied wooden houses.

A buxom young woman was kneeling in front of a small narrow flight of wooden stairs, arranging freshly gathered branches of fir in the form of a fan, which is the invariable doormat of every

dwelling in Finland. So apparently this was the entrance.

"Is this the Societetshuset?" I asked politely. The buxom maid started up, rushed up the stairs, and disappeared within, without vouchsafing a reply to my question.

However, the next moment a neatly-dressed, nice-looking maid appeared in the doorway and smiled a welcome so encouragingly, that I felt at home at once. The entrance in no way prepared me for the large well-furnished bedroom she showed me into. That room was quite a surprise. Somehow I never expected to find a parquet floor and a real English iron and brass bedstead, with a pile of snowy pillows resting on a stitched red silk counterpane, in that very old-fashioned house.

The little maid evidently took a pride in it. The room was spotlessly clean. "It has recently been refurnished," she said smilingly. "Our best room," she added truthfully. So perhaps other travellers would not fare so well as I had done.

After an excellent lunch and a good cup of coffee and a cigarette, I sauntered out on a tour of inspection. The weather was so delightfully warm that one preferred to walk on the shady side of the street.

I had the good fortune to come across a friend who lived in the neighbourhood of Sordavala, and who had come in to the town for the day. He persuaded me to join himself and a small party who were going out that afternoon for a long trip in a steamer on Lake Ladoga, possibly as far as the famous Russian monastery of Valamo, situated on one of the most picturesque islands of the lake. To be at Sordavala,

and not to visit Valamo, would be like going to Rome and not visiting the Coliseum.

The steamer was leaving in an hour, and I promised to be there in good time. During the interval I managed to give a hasty glance at the quaint old-world market-place, and entered the two silversmiths shops that overlooked it, to ask if they had any antique silver for sale. But in both cases I was disappointed. From there I took a cab and drove to the public park of Vakarsalmi, situated on a hill to the west of the town.

This park is quite one of the attractions of Sordavala, and well deserves a visit. The view from the tower, built on the summit of the hill, is delightful. The town appears shrunk into the limits of a small picture, and an almost bewildering vista of forests and waters meets the eye on every side. It is as if Ladoga was playing a game of hide-and-seek, constantly disappearing and reappearing in a circle of hills, bays, and creeks.

Immediately below the tower one sees veiled through an intervening screen of trees, the wide grass bank that forms the natural site for the great Sordavala musical festival, held there every third summer. The lofty dome of the large, open pavilion, capable of holding over eight hundred singers, showed up well in the distance against a background of silver birches and pines. I am told that from the summit of the tower where I was standing the sound of those eight hundred voices rising in unison above the trees has a most thrilling effect on the hearer.

When I was there, only the birds were holding

festival. Their song nearly made me forget that an hour does not last for ever. My last glance I gave towards the wide sweep of cornfields and pasture-land that stretches inland. A tiny rivulet, like a thread of gold in the sunlight, intersected the pastures, where herds of cattle, some of them standing knee deep in the water, were grazing.

The soft tinkle of their metal bells was lifted upwards on the wings of the breeze, so that I heard the sound even more distinctly than if I had been in the valley. I filled my mind with that idyllic picture of rural peace, and then hurried back to my waiting droschka.

I arrived late at our meeting-place, but fortunately, or unfortunately as it proved afterwards, our chartered steamer was also late in making her appearance.

At last the exemplary patience of the three ladies who were of our party was rewarded. Our belated steamer was sighted, and after some delays, caused by the attaching of a huge barge that we were taking in tow to some distant parish, we pushed off.

The barge was immense, almost the same size as our steamer, and was filled with the household gods of a yeoman family to which we were giving a lift. The family, consisting of a smiling mother, two equally smiling babies, two servant-wenches, and a husband of the meek-and-mild school, sat in the small covered-in salon of the steamer, with their eyes fixed anxiously on the bumping barge, which, instead of following in our wake, as a properly minded barge ought to have done, persisted in swinging round to one side, making the piled-up contents look in terrible danger of falling into the sea,

especially a white-painted cot that surmounted the erection like a sugar-plum on a cake.

I felt annoyed with the manners of that barge, because it distracted my attention from the exquisite lights and shades that played riot over the mirrored surface of Lake Ladoga.

As we left Sordavala the steamer cut direct across the bay, and then skirted the shores to the right. The large seminary for board school teachers was the first noticeable building outside the harbour; and the last was an immense storehouse for petroleum, brought in great quantities from Russia across Lake Ladoga by way of the Neva, which empties itself into the lake.

After that the scenery became more imposing. The waters widen considerably, and high hills outline themselves against the horizon with charming effect. Small hamlets nestling at their feet gave to the whole scene the look of an Italian lake—an illusion heightened by the splendid clearness of the cloudless blue sky and the wealth of sunshine that made it almost impossible to believe that three hours had already passed since midday.

The game of hide-and-seek that I had already noticed from the heights of Vakersalmi Park, was more than ever in evidence on the water itself. The hills and waters kept advancing and retreating in a tantalizing manner. Ladoga was not one lake, but a thousand lakes with a myriad shores. At least that was the impression it gave me, but I had then only seen its playful side; further on the thousand lakes developed into one immense sea, upon whose surface the ghostly mists of evening were rising in

the distance. That is the Ladoga the seamen fear—the treacherous, cruel Ladoga that drags men down to their destruction.

Ladoga has been called the double-faced, and surely no name could describe it better. Within the circle of those sheltering hills, within the touch of those peaceful green-clad shores, I never suspected that other Ladoga.

I still remember the strange effect of a narrow waterway through which we passed. In the background a hill covered with dark pines was reddened into glory by the fierce light of the sinking sun, but this waterway had no colour of its own. No verdure clad the gaunt grey rocks of its shores. No laughter came from the little grey log hut, that crept within the shadows of those grey rocks as if hiding from the prying eyes of man, who had come to spy out its poverty. No breeze fluttered over the damp fishing-nets upon the beach. The tinge of grey wrapped the rocks, the hut, the nets, into one note of intense sadness.

A slight chilliness made itself felt now, and the shores receded more and more.

Our family had long since been handed over to the barge. The meek husband went first, then the servant-wenches, who groped about between the bedding and saucepans until they found an immense pair of oars, with which they navigated the boat. After that the smiling mother was helped down, and last of all the smiling babies, who even under such trying circumstances still kept their smiling expressions.

The last I saw of that smiling family was a vision

of a perilously overloaded barge slowly being punted towards a miniature bridge that jutted out into the shallow waters of their bay.

Perhaps that family had cheered us, for soon after their departure a sense of depression came over our party. Our captain—a queer little man—almost a dwarf in height, with an enormous beard and shaggy eyebrows, kept looking towards the horizon and shaking his head.

“The mists are coming up. The ladies will only be able to look at Valamo, and then we must return.” The little captain uttered our doom in a kindly manner, but his eyes blinked sadly.

We had therefore to content ourselves with just grazing the borders of the vast Ladoga sea, and had duly pointed out to us in the distance a dim speck on the horizon, which we were told comprised the famed islands of Valamo, where the well-known Russian monastery is situated.

The monastery was founded in 992 by two hermits, Sergej and Herman, who sought amongst the entrancing scenery of Valamo a refuge from the snares and sadness of the world.

Since those far-off days Valamo has been a retreat for the weary. Nowadays it has grown into the proportions of an independent kingdom under the autocratic rule of the reigning abbot. Hospitality is given to all strangers who visit the islands, irrespective of race or religion. The riches of Valamo are supposed to exceed those of any other community in the world.

A splendid church has been erected over the graves of the founders, containing immense treasures

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LAKE LADOGA: THE GROTTOS OF ORJANTSAARI

of gold and jewels, presented by the faithful who have visited at their shrine.

Our glimpse of Valamo not being exactly satisfying, the skipper, to make up for our disappointment, took us another way back, and gave us the opportunity of a hasty visit to the beautiful grottoes of Orjantsaari.

This is one of the most picturesque spots on Lake Ladoga, about halfway between Valamo and Sordavala. A narrow creek or gully, cut between two sheer precipices of magnificent granite, forms the entrance to these grottoes. Their splendid height, as well as the curious colour of the stone—a dull green, striped with a vivid yellow—gave a sinister appearance to them. Those grottoes might have been the abode of evil spirits, and we were all glad when we backed out once more into the open waters.

That some evil spirit had pursued us was soon made very evident. The mist came sweeping down like a great cloud of vapour and hid the outlines of the distant shores, when suddenly our steering gear broke in twain. Not a very agreeable occurrence in the midst of that dangerous coast. However, nothing appears to disturb the equanimity of a Finnish sailor. The captain assured the ladies there was no need for alarm as they had an emergency steering gear in the stern cabin. He sent his mate into that cabin, in which he had to steer according to the captain's orders, shouted from one end of the steamer to the other.

We had had about an hour of slow duck-like motion, steaming at half-speed, when suddenly the

captain became furiously excited, and began shouting orders in a fluent mixture of Finnish, Swedish, and Russian. But no language could avert our doom—we had struck on a sand-hill in the middle of the open water, and were firmly imbedded thereon! Had it been a rock, my tour in Finland would have been brought to an abrupt conclusion.

All's well that ends well! After strenuous efforts on the part of the crew and ourselves, with the help of long poles, we at last glided out into the open waters again.

After this we had no further adventures. At last we were landed safely at Sordavala, thoroughly chilled and famished, and our ladies very much subdued, just as the clocks were striking midnight.

CHAPTER IX

Quaint wedding ceremonies—The bride's crown—Lengthy feasts—Surfeit of food—A parsonage dinner—Bear hunts—A true bear story—A fictitious one—My first step northwards—The marble quarries that built St. Petersburg—The wealthy Countess of Pembroke—Arrival at Joensuu—A deserted hotel—Never go by appearances—My substantial ghost—The creation of a masterpiece—A make-believe night—Floating timber—First view of Nyslott Castle—A town of islands.

I REGRETTED that my time in Sordavala was so limited that I was obliged to give up a drive to Kirjavalahi, a well-known excursion in the neighbourhood. The road from Sordavala, a distance of about twelve kilometres, ascends slowly in deep, winding curves through grand mountain scenery.

Close to Kirjavalahi is the highest hill of the Ladoga mountains, from which I was told one obtained a magnificent view of forests and water, considered to be the most extensive in Finland.

However, I had to console myself with the thought that even with the best will in the world one cannot do everything.

The evening before, I had been sorely tempted to postpone my departure another day, not for the Kirjavalahi view, but to see a peasant wedding in the neighbourhood.

A wedding in that part of Finland is not a thing

to be undertaken lightly. It calls for an amount of energy that would scare off any ordinary man. The ceremonies attending it last over four days, during which period the unfortunate bride is obliged to keep on her finery, with only a few hours respite.

The weight of the bridal crown is appalling. It is the common property of a whole district, and is lent for the occasion. These crowns are of very ancient workmanship, being several hundred years old.

I remember well the reception at a wedding I attended some years ago in this part of Finland. The bride and bridegroom were seated in the two places of honour, arrayed in all their splendour, and the bride held on her knees a sieve, covered with a rich silk shawl. Then, as the guests advanced one by one, each according to his rank, to congratulate the pair, each guest slipped a monetary offering into the sieve. The sum collected is towards the outfit of the bride.

But the most trying part of the proceedings to me was that, as each offering was put into the sieve, the name of the donor *and the sum given* were shouted out in a loud voice by a groomsman standing beside the bride! This ceremony concluded, the feasting commenced, and I warn any one attending a wedding of this description to come armed with the appetite of a lion.

The Finns are, as a rule, a most abstemious people, excepting under the especial circumstances of a wedding or a funeral, which ceremonies rival each other in the eating line, the food provided and eaten on these occasions being quite abnormal.

Even in the upper and middle classes this extraordinary surfeit of food is considered a sign of hospitality on the part of the hostess, and a sign of good breeding on the part of the guests to consume.

In some instances I have known of, such a banquet has obliged the host and hostess to live on practically nothing for the remaining part of the year, except the plainest of fares. A case in point happened this summer, when a dear pastor and his wife, living in an isolated country parish on a yearly stipend that in England would have barely sufficed to keep two people for a month—not to mention the goodly supply of olive branches with which they had been blessed—issued invitations for a dinner to celebrate their silver-wedding day.

I have known that pastor for a good many years, and have never failed to feel the better after seeing him. He is the kindest and most cheerful of men. I have never seen him look discontented or worried. And yet to an outsider his life would seem maddening in its unchanging monotony, bound in the iron frame of poverty.

This dinner, the event of their lives, was unstinted in the veritable bounty they set before their guests. About thirty people sat down to table, and the fare provided would have been sufficient for a hundred. The pastor's wife herself handed each course to the guest of honour, who sat on the pastor's right. In the middle of the repast, six mighty currant puddings with vanilla sauce appeared, and then the company started afresh with four enormous geese, followed with four more courses. This may read like a fairy tale, but I can vouch for its truthfulness.

This part of Finland is also one of the few remaining districts where one can indulge in the sport of bear-hunting. But what was a decade or two ago the sport of all is now only feasible for those endowed with a goodly supply of cash.

The bears of Finland are, alas! becoming less numerous year by year; and the so-called "bear-rings" are as rigidly preserved and watched as any game preserves in England.

Nowadays when Honey-paw—to mention one of the many pet names the bear has in Finland—looks around for a suitable home for his long winter sleep, he is carefully spied upon by the watching eyes of the peasants, who track the poor king of the forests to his lair. After that they mark a large ring round that particular corner of the forest, and leave the unsuspecting bear to his slumbers. Probably months later the ring will be sold to some sportsman from Helsingfors or St. Petersburg, desirous of a bear-hunt. The average price of a bear-ring varies from £10 to £14.

Writing of bears reminds me of a certain Finnish baron, who captured a cub, and so tamed him that he managed to train him to stand behind his sledge as groom. One wonders if the strange groom was affably received by his fellow-servants at the houses the noble baron visited. Unfortunately the bear became as arrogant as his master, and one day, not liking a guest who had been invited to take a seat in the baronial sledge, he suddenly gave him an astounding blow with one of his great paws. This serious breach of etiquette in a well-trained groom he had to pay for with his life. A most

regrettable end after his many years of exemplary service.

Bear stories have always had a fascination for me, and the most realistic tale that Selma Lagerlöf, the great Swedish authoress, ever wrote was about a bear. It is years since I read that story, but so vividly did it impress me that I have never forgotten it.

During a terrific snowstorm one dark winter's day in the North of Sweden, an old man loses his way in the forest. At last darkness overtakes him, and, numbed with cold and fatigue, he throws himself down in a snowdrift to die. But gradually he feels life returning, and warmth, delicious warmth, creeping through his iced veins. He had chanced to fall on a bear's lair. The bear lets the old man sleep by his side all night. With the break of dawn the old man steals away and finds his way to his home. There his sons welcome him with jubilation, and rejoice when he tells them they shall have a day's sport. The old man precedes the party to show them the way to the lair. As they approach it the trapped bear rushes out, and with awful force fells his betrayer to the ground. The splendid mercy of the brute and the base ingratitude of man are described with intense dramatic power that only the genius of Selma Lagerlöf is capable of. I read the tale in the original, but I believe it has since been translated into English.

On leaving Sordavala I was making my first step northwards. Hitherto I had been dodging about in a south-easterly direction.

My next halting-place would be Nyslott, which

probably by the time this book is printed will be a much more accessible place than it was when I visited it, as next summer the railway line will be extended there. I was obliged to make a somewhat long *détour* to reach it. From Sordavala I took the 1.30 p.m. train to Joensuu (six hours' journey), whence there is an excellent service of night steamers to Nyslott, which is reached the following morning about eight a.m.

The train on leaving Sordavala skirts the famous marble quarries of Ruskeala. The marble obtained there is of a very fine quality and curiously marked, particularly the green shades veined with white.

The first marble quarried at Ruskeala was in 1768. Peter the Great of Russia found in this marble one of the finest materials for building his new city, and enormous quantities were despatched to St. Petersburg. Isaacs Cathedral, the Marble Palace, the Palace of Gatchina, are all constructed of this beautiful Finnish marble.

Another place of interest in this province is the ancient feudal castle of Kronoborg, now completely ruined. The vast estates of Kronoborg belonged, in 1797, to a Count Woronzoff, who married an English-woman, the widow of the eleventh Earl of Pembroke, in 1808. After his death she inherited the enormous estate, as well as the heavy rent-roll, but never resided in Finland, and later sold the property to Count Besborodko.

The fatiguing experiences of the day before on Lake Ladoga had made me frantically tired, and I therefore enjoyed an occasional forty winks on the journey from Sordavala to Joensuu.

Joensuu has rather a pretentious look, as if it wished to appear older than it really was. And yet in spite of all its endeavours it is still frankly in the green state of youth.

The ground plan of the town was laid in 1848, on the same lines as a chess-board: everything straight and orderly, and—hopelessly prosaic. The only redeeming feature of Joensuu is the river that flows through its midst, and that, although it was also a perfectly straight line, was made picturesque by the numerous craft fastened along the broad white stone quays, waiting to load or unload their merchandise. The quays are bordered with well-kept public gardens, just as orderly and straight as the rest of this straight little town. Joensuu cannot be a very extravagant place to live in; the cab fares are only threepence, and so far were the cleanest cabs I had seen in Finland.

After I had walked a sufficient number of times aimlessly up and down the principal street, my attention was suddenly arrested by the familiar word "Societetshuset," which gave me the inspiration that I might kill a little time by having supper there, before returning to the steamer.

I acted at once on my impulse and entered the hotel. The entrance was particularly gloomy, and not a person was visible. It was like entering the uninhabited castle we have all read about in fairy books. Only this hotel had nothing fairy-like about it—to be candid, it smelt musty. After wandering through several dreary apartments, I hit upon a room that looked as if it might be a dining-room. In any case there were some tables with damp-

looking cloths on them, and one table really had a cruet-stand. Then I commenced to think of my next move. That table looked out upon a neglected garden.

"The garden once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul."

The grass grew rank and high; the path was moss-grown, and looked as if no human feet ever trod it, only the ghosts of long ago. One red rose, a solitary survivor in that garden of desolation, hung its head as if ashamed of being there.

In the midst of my thoughts, half of Shelley and half of rage, at this most queerly managed hotel, I distinctly heard footsteps. They came heavily down the garden-path, and into my sight there came the very fattest woman I have ever seen in all my life. Barnum's fat lady would have been slim and fragile by her generous side. She did not glide, but panted past my line of vision, and disappeared up some wooden steps leading from the garden to an old-fashioned wooden door that I had not noticed until then.

For one moment, as the door opened, I saw within a gleam of copper utensils shimmering in the light of an unseen fire. Then the door shut to with a heavy thud. But that brief glimpse had wonderfully encouraged me, I felt certain that shining copper belonged to a kitchen, and that my substantial ghost was its high priestess.

I waited some time in the hopes that some one would break in upon my solitude. Then I boldly carried out my attack, which ended by my finding

myself behind that mysterious door in the presence of its ruler. At closer quarters she was somewhat alarming, and at first utterly refused to cook me anything.

I had not hit upon the usual hour when the ordinary inhabitants of Joensuu have their baser appetites satisfied. The entire staff of the hotel had finished their work for the day.

However, in the end she relented, and said she would do what she could. With that I had to be satisfied, and retired again to my table and the cruet-stand.

Expectancy lent wings to time. I had heard the voice of my charmer screaming orders to some one, so at least she had managed to catch one of the absent staff. My curiosity became still keener when down those wooden steps there came a young woman, wearing what probably was the height of the fashion in Joensuu, but which considerably startled a humble being like myself. What struck me most in that remarkable get up was a pair of high-heeled, lemon-coloured leather boots, surmounted by a short magenta skirt in dips and ends—flounces, I believe, is the proper name. This apparition, looking, alas! distinctly sulky, walked across the garden to a shed, swinging disdainfully a small wooden pail in her left hand. I had only time to wonder what she wanted there, when she reappeared leading out a cow, and in the midst of the tall rank grass began milking violently into that pail. I felt most awfully sorry for the cow. After that, "things" kept on happening.

The fat cook waddled down herself to the garden, and evidently disturbed an unseen hen, or more likely

a dozen by the noise. She returned majestically, holding something concealed in her apron. Anyway, I had the satisfaction of knowing that the eggs were new-laid. A small boy appeared suddenly upon the scene, bent almost double under an immense block of crystal clear ice.

During all these divers preparations my curiosity became doubled as to what the meal eventually would turn out to be.

I must own that I was quite prepared to be disappointed, and therefore felt doubly dumfounded at the repast set before me. To commence with, I had a piled-up dish of delicious miniature lobsters (crayfish), a delicacy to be found in most parts of Finland. After that they placed before me an immense omelette filled with fresh asparagus heads. The maker of that omelette deserved the Order of the Garter. The chef of the Café Anglais in Paris could not have beaten it in excellency, and I speak from experience. The omelette had hardly vanished before a splendid salmon trout with hollandaise sauce succeeded it. Then, lastly, I was offered a brimming bowl of wild strawberries set on ice, accompanied by a gigantic jug of whipped cream. I still owe a debt of gratitude to that substantial ghost of the deserted hotel of Joensuu. If I had not been by nature somewhat bashful I swear I would have kissed her. As it was, I contented myself by thanking her in person, and slipping a small remembrance into the hand that had created that never-to-be-forgotten omelette.

Time had sped quickly, and when I reached the steamer the steam was already up, and a clock close

by struck eleven. Only an hour short of midnight, and still one could have read the smallest print without any difficulty. I think that was the first time that I realized how far North I was.

In England nobody has the slightest conception of those luminous nights of the far North. They have a fascination that no one can realize without having seen them. Night as we understand it is banished, and a miraculous twilight replaces it. A queen of light, who only changes her apparel from her first garb of softest rose to a succession of vivid blues growing deeper and more majestic until they change into her evening shades of scarlet and purple, which in their turn are replaced with the luminous silver grey tones of night, through which one can still distinctly see the shimmer of all the pinks, the blues, and the purples that had gone before.

As we steamed down the river of Joensuu, daylight was only pretending to hide behind that silver grey veil, that barely concealed the blushes of dawn behind it.

The night was so wonderfully beautiful that I was loth to quit the deck, and I watched until I saw the first rose of dawn in the east before I descended to my bunk.

When I awoke I felt considerably startled by seeing the bluest of blue eyes looking solemnly at me through the open port-holes. At first I thought I was still dreaming, and they probably belonged to a rather inquisitive mermaid. Then, when I had sufficiently aroused myself, I realized we had come to a standstill and had anchored alongside a landing-bridge. The eyes, on closer inspection, belonged

to a good-looking lad, who, together with an array of companions, were clustered together on the bridge, deeply intent on the latest arrivals.

I was afraid that I had overslept myself. The gentle motion of a Finnish lake steamer, with only the faint swish of the divided furrow of water through which one glides, is delightfully conducive to sleep. I therefore jumped up hastily and hurled a question towards the blue eyes, with the unexpected effect of sending them reeling backwards with dismay. I suppose my sudden onslaught was not usual, so I did not repeat the formula.

In a short time I found myself rushing up the companion stairs to the deck. I just missed coming into a serious collision with the captain, who was in the act of descending.

"Is this Nyslott?" I panted.

"Not for another two hours," he replied shortly.

He was rubbing his arm, so perhaps my head was harder than I imagined. I felt quite glad. Any one who has got up by mistake will understand my feelings.

Hills of palest, tenderest green foliage stood side by side with blotches of almost black fir trees. Miles and miles of water crept here and there and everywhere. One moment the shores came so close that the trees shadowed the sunlit deck; the next, a vast expanse of motionless water came into view.

Very little traffic was to be seen. It was all vast, lonely, and beautiful. Now and again we met a floating raft of timber, nearly a mile in length, formed of immense stocks of trees roughly connected with great iron chains. They had probably

THE
CALIFORNIA



NYSLOTT CASTLE

already journeyed hundreds of miles from some far distant forest, and were being slowly carried down the waters of Saima towards the canal and the big world beyond.

It is sad to see those giant dead trees herded together and creeping night and day, inch by inch, further away from the land of their birth.

A town of any importance in Finland is always heralded by an advance guard of summer villas, and Nyslott is no exception to the rule.

The most remarkable residence in the proximity of Nyslott is the Moorish villa belonging to a Finnish general. The whole building is an exact copy of an Oriental building. The white loggias reflected in the blue water reminded me of a well-known Arab villa in Algiers. But fir trees, instead of palms, shadowed the dazzling white walls, and bare-footed Finnish children stood upon the shore watching our steamer glide past them.

Soon after we had left that glimpse of the Orient, another picture came into sight. This time not a copy, but a splendid monument of the past, that still looks to-day a tower of strength and endurance. The first view of that wonderful mediæval Castle of Nyslott, from which the town takes its name, is superb. The great fortress seems to bar the way, and one wonders how any craft, however small, can pass through the swift current that forms a whirlpool round the massive stone walls of the castle, that descend precipitously into the troubled waters.

Beyond that barrier one sees the town of Nyslott, or rather a diverse collection of villages perched on different islands, connected at the most unexpected

angles with low wooden bridges. It would be difficult to find a more picturesque site for a town. It ought to be called "The Town of the Islands."

The mainland as one enters the harbour is on the right, and at present there is in course of construction from there to the town a solid stone sea-wall built right across the water, upon whose broad back next summer a train will run. The wall appeared to me unnecessarily ugly, and looked like a weird sea monster that did its level best to spoil an otherwise charming picture.

As we approached the landing-stage, the town became quite important, with the inevitable cobblestone streets and broad white stone quays that nearly every town in Finland possesses.

It certainly seemed a very wideawake place for Finland, and although the hour was so early there were an unusual number of people astir. "Not only females, but ladies as well," as an English policeman once said to me, in speaking of the fair sex. Ladies in light summer gowns and brightly hued parasols gave quite a festive air to the place. Until that moment I had forgotten that Nyslott was a summer spa, and possessed quite a reputation for its healing waters and baths, which are largely patronized by visitors during the summer season.

I had fortunately telegraphed the day before to the hotel for a room. Otherwise I would have shared the same fate as some other travellers who had to be turned away for lack of accommodation.

The new hotel faces the landing quay, but it was overcrowded and badly managed. I spent as little

of my time as I could there, and had my meals at the Casino restaurant.

The Casino was opened in 1896, and is delightfully situated on a little island all to itself. It is connected with the town by a long wooden bridge, intended principally for pedestrians, but one can drive over it if a special permission from the manager of the Casino is obtained. The building itself is very primitive for its high-sounding name. It possesses a miniature stage for private theatricals, and a ballroom with pine benches set closely along the bare wooden walls; also a reading-room that had Swedish, Finnish, and Russian journals, and one single copy of the *Graphic*, placed in a prominent position. It was comparatively of quite a recent date, being only three months old.

The park that surrounds the Casino is very well planned, with numerous shady walks and comfortable seats from where exquisite peeps of the old castle and the surrounding country could be obtained. There are also tennis courts and croquet lawns, and a band-stand, where the Casino band plays no less than three times a day.

Quite an array of attractions for the youth of Nyslott to while away the summer hours, while papa or mamma are enjoying the sensations of a mud or a pine-needle bath.

CHAPTER X

A mediæval castle—Ghosts of other days—Ancient chapel—A glimpse of history—The ladies' garden—The land of peace—Museum of the castle—Five wise and five foolish virgins—Baby goloshes—War memories—A gallant fight—An unwritten page—A pleasant excursion from Nyslott—The crown jewel of Finland—A primitive bridge—Lack of human habitations—Church boats—The mineral wealth—A country of granite—The shadow of poverty—A face that haunted—Arrival at Pungaharju—The world and the wilderness—A modern hostelry—A gorgeous panorama—The high-road upon the waters—The fragrance of the pines—Birthplace of the Finnish National Anthem—A red-gold organ—Unshed tears—A message of hope.

I WAITED until the evening light was red before I visited the old castle. The rays of the setting sun flamed through the empty turret windows and lit up the deserted halls as with a renewal of their past glories.

Modern Nyslott for the moment was obliterated and forgotten as I walked down the steep narrow cobbled street towards the illuminated fortress. It is only a humble street, not even possessing a pavement, and the houses on either side are the homes of poverty. And yet if the stones could speak, they would tell us that many a proud and gallant knight had ridden down that narrow way, and fair ladies had watched him descend and ride over the drawbridge from the overhanging windows of the old castle.

The red light filled that ancient turret window of the ladies' parlour with ghosts of other days. I stood for some time watching it and that grand old castle that stands to-day almost as intact as when it was built by the proud Erik Axelsson Tott, in the year 1475.

I was quite disappointed to find no drawbridge lowered for my benefit. I had to content myself by crossing the intervening stretch of water in an old-fashioned ferry, that, judging from appearances, must have done duty at least a hundred years. The current was so swift, that it was only by grim strength that the boatman managed to pull her round to the landing-steps of the castle.

The outside of the castle is majestic and imposing, but it in no way prepares you for the vast proportions of the interior, or for the extraordinary massiveness of the walls—in some places fourteen feet thick. It is justly considered one of the finest examples of mediæval architecture that exists.†

The entrance is dark and gloomy, and leads into the Knights' Hall, a fine room, lofty and well lighted, from which a winding stone staircase, so steep and narrow that only one person can ascend at a time, leads to the ladies' apartments in the South Tower.

The topmost floor of this tower possesses a curiously formed circular room, with no less than fifteen round portholes inset in the massive walls, each of which affords a wonderful panorama of the surrounding country.

The chapel is also in this tower, immediately below the so-called Virgins' Bower, a small room with a window set so high that the fair damsels must have

had some difficulty in looking out of it. The chapel possesses a fine Gothic ceiling, and is partly panelled in wood, which formerly contained secret hiding-places for treasures in time of war.

The sound of war has often echoed through the old place, and the castle has withstood countless sieges in its time. From the first it was the protector not only of Savolaks, the province wherein it stands, but in a measure the whole of Finland. By the Finns themselves it is named even in our day Savonlinna, "The Fort of Savolaks."

In 1547 the commandant of the castle was the well-known Gustaf Fincke, whose letters to the Swedish king at that time gives us such a lifelike picture of the contemporary history of that period.

The last military occupation of the castle was in 1849. After which it was used for some years as a State prison, but with the incoming rush of modern methods that flooded Finland in the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century, the prisoners were removed to newer quarters. Nowadays only the pigeons and an old caretaker and his wife wander through the deserted passages and halls.

The bastion is of later date, the old one having been destroyed by the Russians during the wars of the sixteenth century. The one erected in its place contains an immense circular hall with nine windows, which is now used for public festivals.

Some idea of the great thickness of the walls can be gathered from the fact that oak benches over twelve feet long are placed along the sides of the window niches.

The smallest thing in the castle was a tiny plot of

grass surrounded with overshadowing walls. This was formerly the ladies' garden. I wonder what the ladies of the present age would say to such limited premises. Yet probably those fair dames who paced that miniature plot were more contented than their sisters of to-day.

Before I left, I visited the little museum of the castle, which is placed in one of the upper rooms close to the entrance. The collection is not large, and mostly consists of paintings and wood-carvings of the Catholic period, taken from the old chapel, which is now denuded of ornaments, and not used for religious services.

The oldest painting there, dating from the fourteenth century, is on a panel of wood, and depicts the five wise and the five foolish virgins. The five wise maidens are fat and rosy-cheeked, the five foolish painfully lean with upturned noses.

My old ferryman had had another boatload of passengers since I had come across. I did not see them, but the evidence of their arrival as well as of their nationality was unmistakable.

In the shadow of the ancient gateway there stood a row of neat goloshes. A Finlander sheds his goloshes on entering any building as naturally as a Mahomedan sheds his shoes under similar circumstances. There are summer and there are winter goloshes. True they are sometimes discarded in the summer, but a drop of rain will bring them out. I remembered then that it had rained that morning. There was something nice and homely about these goloshes—they belonged so evidently to a papa, a mamma, and a baby. The baby goloshes were the

tinest I have ever seen; the wearer could not be more than three years old. If the boatman had not been looking, I should have stolen one as a curiosity to hang on my watch-chain. I own I would have had a guilty feeling in thinking of the small owner's fury. The Finns set great store by their goloshes, and invariably place a great flaunting brass initial on the inside of the sole; so that when they are off you can see clearly to whom they belong.

The old boatman was quite loquacious on our return journey, and I had a long chat with him on the opposite shore. He was a fine old man, well knit, broad-shouldered and sinewy—a worthy descendant of the sons of Savolaks who had earned the title of the "fighting boys." No part of Finland has been so frequently devastated with fire and sword as this particular corner of it.

There were continual wars all through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Then there came a breath of peace, with interludes of fighting, until the devastating wars of the eighteenth century, which ended with a victory for the Russian forces under the command of the gallant Scotch soldier General Keith. The Finnish and Swedish troops were under the command of the Swedish General Buddenbrock, who so mismanaged the disastrous campaign that on his return to Sweden he was tried by Court Martial, and had to suffer the death penalty.

Perhaps the most famous fight that has taken place in Savolaks was the brilliant defence of the bridge of Porosalmi on June 12, 1789, when the "Savolaks boys," five hundred strong, under the command of Colonel Aminoff, held at bay the enemy, who

outnumbered them by ten to one, for seventeen hours. At last, when almost exhausted, they were reinforced by the long-expected Bjerneborg regiment. The Russians then retreated, leaving over nine hundred dead on the field, while more than half of the gallant "Savolaks boys" were killed. The fight was so desperate that it is said when the Savolaks boys had used up all their bullets, they tore off the buttons from their uniform and fired them at the enemy. The stirring episode is well told by the Finnish poet Runeberg, in his poems describing this last campaign in Finland. Those glorious lines would make the most sluggish blood run quicker, and to my mind they have never been surpassed as lifelike records of endurance and valour.

I bade good night to my old boatman with regret. If I had had the time I would have made him tell me more stories of those brave soldiers, whose bones are now dust beneath the battlefields of Savolaks. The blood spilt there sank deep into the soil, which is the heart of Finland. Their graves are unknown, only the wild flowers wreath them each summer a garland of remembrance.

There was a purple haze that evening over the hills of Nyslott, and the mild summer evening had a soft moisture in it. The atmosphere fitted in with my mood. The mystery of that northern land, of those dead soldiers, and of our own lives, had cast a spell of reflection upon me. They all seemed an intricate puzzle, and when I fell asleep that night I was still trying to put them together.

Sometimes—— But no! I will not inflict possible readers with personal theories. Yet, as everybody

enjoys the delightful privilege of being able to skip the prosy part of books, I might just as well have continued!

The next morning was again gloriously fine, a day absolutely created for seeing the much-lauded Pungaharju, the "Crown jewel" of Finland.

I can imagine no pleasanter excursion on a fine summer day than the two hours' trip on a lake steamer from Nyslott to Pungaharju.

Now and again at long intervals we touched some primitive little bridge—not the decorative villa bridges of the Helsingfors or Viborg archipelago, but very homely ones roughly constructed of natural pine logs. Often our steamer did not even moor, but some one on shore deftly caught the budgets of letters or newspapers that were thrown down to them. I particularly remember one bridge. It consisted of a series of immense boulders of granite thrown far out upon the shallow waters one stone after the other. The stones that were too wide apart to conveniently jump on to were connected with single planks of wood without even a pretence of a rail. The water, disturbed by the approach of the steamer, swished across the planks and left them perilously wet and slippery.

There were no passengers for this bridge, but the steersman deposited on a boulder a large market basket filled to overflowing with divers edibles. I was considering, as we backed out again to deeper waters, what would be the fate of that lonely basket, when a buxom, bare-footed maid appeared on the top of the hill that led down to the bridge. Judging from her speed she was in evident state of alarm that the

basket and its contents might serve as an appetizing dinner for the nearest water-nymph.

Soon after that episode we had to traverse a very shallow piece of water. A furrow had been dug out to enable the steamer to pass through, and it was marked on either side by a series of long poles that served as a guide for the vagaries of the path, that curved and twisted in a zig-zag fashion between them.

Another fact that struck me as odd was the almost complete lack of villages or any sign of human habitations, and yet an isolated church built close to the water's edge was not an uncommon sight. The reason of this is that a Finnish peasant adores his waterway, either by boat in summer or a sledge in winter.

The inner land, particularly in the central parts, of the country is still to a greater part uncultivated and uninhabited. Even at the best of times the country roads are very indifferent, and therefore a Finnish peasant will prefer to row twelve miles to church rather than go a short cut by land.

The church boats were formerly of vast proportions, taking eighty to one hundred people with twenty pairs of oars. This passion for going by water was so great that in a very poor parish that only owned one church boat, which barely sufficed for half of the parishioners, the sterner sex, rather than go by land, would swim alongside the boat, leaving it to their women-kind the privilege of occupying the boat.

If Finland were nearer to civilization, it would doubtless be one of the richest countries in Europe,

just owing to this facility of transport on the countless waterways that intersect the land. So far only the vast wealth of the forests have been utilized, and that is entirely due to the water communication. But there are millions of money wasting away that have never been converted into use owing to the difficulty of transport to foreign lands.

The land is rich in minerals: iron, copper, tin, and even gold. The granite of Finland alone would yield a princely revenue, and the quantities of granite are so immense that the whole of London could be rebuilt with it and yet there would be plenty to spare.

This superb stone is rarely seen more westward. By a strange irony of fate one of the few instances where it has found a domicile beyond the Russian Empire, is as the resting-place for the mortal remains of the man who conquered half of Europe and yet who failed to set his foot in this northern land. The Little Corporal who set alight a torch that even burns in our day, sleeps upon a granite block hewn from the cliffs of Finland.

The expense of exportation has been, so far, greater than the profits, and only Finland itself benefits by this wealth of granite.

Nearly all public buildings are constructed of this famous stone, which is even converted into such a base use as a foundation for a cowhouse, granite being cheaper than bricks in this fortunate country.

But Finland's riches are her poverty, and as I travelled further inland I became more and more struck with this note of poverty. Along the coasts the land is more cultivated, trade is more flourishing,

and in like manner the people are brighter and in better circumstances. It is only when travelling in the interior that the vast tracks of untilled land and desolate waters strikes the onlooker with the hardness of life in these regions.

Amidst the sun-swept waters that glorious summer day, I now and again felt that breath of melancholy. Perhaps it was only the face of a young peasant girl, standing alone upon a shore looking wistfully at us as we steamed slowly out of her range of vision, that haunted me. The passing of the steamer was her daily excitement, a thing that broke the stillness as the birds had broken through the awakening spring, only to pass out of her sight as the last swallow would do when she would still be standing there, watching the ice form upon the motionless waters in the awful silence of the coming winter.

I was glad when we reached Pungaharju. There were a score or more of excursionists upon the bridge, good-tempered, uninteresting folk; a very commonplace gathering that a rival steamer from another direction had just deposited there.

An old Russian general was screaming in a loud, high-pitched voice. He had forgotten something on the departing steamer, and was swearing in such a good old homely fashion that it was quite inspiring. In any case it brought the world and its noise in delightfully close contact with the wilderness.

I followed in the tracks of the other tourists, who all seemed bent on racing each other up a very steep path, between the tallest pine trees I had so far seen in Finland. The pines and the ascending single file of human beings obliterated any other view. Therefore,

my first impression of the far-famed Pungaharju was a wee bit disappointing. The haste of that moving file was catching, and I arrived at the top of the hill as breathless as any one. Instead of finding a view, I found a clearing in the trees through which one could see the open verandas of a most up-to-date hostelry, with numerous small tables set out for dinner.

“First come first served” was the order of the day here. Those who lagged behind had to wait until the first set of diners had cleared off. The hotel has been built recently for the use of tourists. Pungaharju was bought by the nation as far back as 1844. The Finnish people wished to keep this unique jewel of Nature from the hands of the builder. Probably those who selected the site for the hotel did it on purpose; so that while occupied in the unromantic task of feeding, one should not be distracted by the marvellous panorama that meets the eye a few yards distant from there.

The idyllic charm of Pungaharju is enchanting: I felt ashamed of my first impression. Sunlit waters and countless isles are seen through trembling birch trees and shadows of motionless firs that rise tier upon tier up the steep bank of land, that ascends almost at right angles from the water on either side of the straight road that has been cut through their midst.

Pungaharju has been likened to an enormous water-fowl with outstretched wings, surrounded by scores of young birds swimming at her side. The tiny islets that float in the wake and alongside the mother island have an extraordinary family likeness

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PUNGAHARJU

in shape. Perhaps the splendour of the day helped to increase the fascination that that picture had for me. The whole scene seemed almost unreal. It was not walking upon earth, but upon some fairy road in the midst of the waters.

I have travelled a great deal, but can recall nothing that approaches Pungaharju. It has now been connected with the mainland by a wooden bridge. . . . The best description is one of five words: "A high-road across the waters." Not a short cut by any means, but a road over six miles in length, and during the whole six miles the road is shadowed with magnificent trees that form an archway above your head.

The freshness and purity of the air upon that narrow line of land and trees, upon the breast of the waters, is simply wonderful. Now and again a floating breeze stole up through the trees, so gently that it was as if an unseen angel had flown past, leaving behind something that no mortal can describe—an infinite calm, a majestic peace filling my heart with the joy of life.

I wished I could have laid in a store of the fragrance from those ancient pines; and that I could have tattooed into my memory that canopy of the bluest of blue skies, that descended deep, deep into the very heart of the silent waters, and painted its greys, golds, and greens with an opalescent reflection of the same wonderful hues. Never shall I forget the clearness of the water that day at Pungaharju; it was like an immense crystal mirror, framed with a thick garland of yellow water-lilies that grew in their thousands all along the banks of that floating high-road.

The best-known spot at Pungaharju is a rustic summer-house, about two miles from the hotel, hallowed by the memory of Runeberg the poet. It is said he penned there those patriotic lines that afterwards became the National Anthem of Finland. It is one of the grandest songs that have ever been written. It burns with a fire of patriotism that shines out to-day with the same strength as it did on that day when he first conceived it amidst the old pines of Pungaharju.

Those pines still stand and watch over that little summer-house. Their lofty trunks, red-gold in colour, were reflected in the crystal waters beneath, like the pipes of an immense organ. Perhaps Runeberg heard the sound of it as Nature unlocked that mighty keyboard and rolled out her sublime melody to the listening poet.

Even a humble being like myself seemed to hear a vibration of those unseen chords that floated up from the surface of the crystal water. The melody was the song of Hope. It was born in the heart of that red-gold organ, but it was carried away by an unknown woman, dressed in the deepest mourning, who had crept noiselessly up close to the spot where I was standing. There were unshed tears in that poor woman's eyes, but I can swear I saw a glimmer of hope steal over her white delicate face as she turned and walked away again as silently as she came.

CHAPTER XI

A water junction—The ghost in the turret window—An old-world sailing vessel—A modern Robinson Crusoe—The parting of the ways—Wild duck—The first breath of autumn—The fuel of Finland—A plucky lad—Timber floats—A newly opened waterway—A modern villa in the wilderness—A famous Finnish dramatist—Yellow water-lilies and pink phlox—A race down a torrent—Picturesque cottages—The crossways—A sympathetic woman—A rest by the waterside—The sleeping village—A Rembrandt picture—Age and youth—Arrival at Kuopio—A hurricane—The governor's residence—Famous breed of horses—The former peasant kings—Puijo hill—A woman of genius—A powerful play.

NYSLOTT is one of the principal water junctions in Finland, and when I left the following day, at one p.m., on the steamer bound for Kuopio, my next halting-place, there was quite a flotilla of different craft starting at the same hour for all parts of the country—an imposing procession, as each vessel in turn passed one by one through the narrow, swiftly flowing stream that separates the castle from the town. As we steamed past the ancient walls, I saw the face of a young girl peeping out from the picturesque turret window of the maiden's bower. Perhaps she was real, but I prefer to think that I had seen a vision of some proud maiden of high degree who had once sat there and watched for the coming of her knight across the sunlit waters of Saima.

They were just as wide-stretched and peaceful in her day, but she must have been startled at the shrill scream of the syren which our pretentious little steamer sent forth, and also at the sound of the hammers that ceaselessly broke the stillness with a discordant noise from the nearly completed embankment, upon which next year a monster of iron would speed past her line of vision.

The stateliness of that splendid mediæval castle does not fit in with the rush of modern life. One ought to approach it by water in one of the old-fashioned sailing boats such as I saw coming towards us, her sails outspread like the wings of a bird, with a fair wind behind and a bronzed-faced, stalwart son of Savolaks standing at the helm.

I shall come out again some summer to Nyslott and hire just such a boat and sail about these waters in quest of unknown bays and islands.

There are lots to be found, and the possibility of a shipwreck from my indifferent navigation does not fill me with fear, so long as I wrecked myself in some spot from where I can comfortably swim ashore. There one need not feel the pangs of hunger, for there is abundance of wild fruit in the forests and countless fish swim in the waters. With any inventive genius it must be easy to fashion a rod. A proper up-to-date Robinson Crusoe would, no doubt, manage to save his gun also.

The real water junction is about two hours distant from Nyslott, when three distinct waterways, one to the east, one north, and one south, come suddenly into view.

So far the flotilla that had left Nyslott at the same

time as we had had been more or less in sight the whole time, but here we all parted, each in our different directions.

We took the broadest path towards the north—a region of desolate waters and green, silent shores. Wild duck were plentiful, and their tameness astonishing. Man had not scared them as yet. I was talking to the captain at the time, and pointed this fact out to him. He was a jovial, good-tempered man, with a portly figure and the mischievous eyes of a school-boy. "I will scare them," he exclaimed laughingly. He dived into his little sanctum on deck and brought out an ancient gun, that reminded me of one I had seen in England that had been rescued from the Spanish Armada. The unexpected shot that rang out across the waters had an extraordinary effect. The sound of it echoed and re-echoed from shore to shore, as if hundreds of other guns were answering to it.

For one moment the atmosphere became darkened with the countless birds that rose from the water. The jovial captain seemed much alarmed that in scaring the ducks he had also scared some ladies on board. I was the chief culprit, and therefore tendered my apologies to them, and explained the reason for the salvo. The ladies nobly forgave me, and later invited me to have coffee with them, so that I have a double reason for remembering my first experience of wild duck shooting that summer in Finland.

The farther north we steamed the more wild and rugged became our surroundings, and there was a faint tinge of freshness in the air that had not been felt in Pungaharju the day before.

Upon an island covered with young birch trees, still clad in that vivid green that is only seen in a country where land and water intermingle, I saw one tree already faintly touched with a glow of red. It was the first whisper that summer was ended, the first breath of coming autumn, that was waiting close by to descend upon those verdant shores and steal from them their brief glorious youth.

The summers of Finland are enchanting but they are cruelly short. That first glint of decay made me shiver. Surely it had no business to be there. We had only passed the borderland of July into August five days since. . . .

I consoled myself by going below to inspect the miniature cabin that had been allotted to me, and in which I was to sleep the night; we were not due to arrive at Kuopio before eight in the morning. The porthole was nearly as large as the cabin, so at least I could count on fresh air. I indulged in forty winks on the narrow bunk, accompanied by a cigarette and a book by Mark Twain "done into Swedish," which in parts was more amusing than the original.

When I came up on deck again we had stopped at a landing-bridge to take in fuel. The fuel of Finland is, needless to say, only wood. Coal is such a rarity that I remember an old peasant woman asking me if I would send her a piece of coal from England as a curiosity.

Evidently the stoker of our steamer intended her to go ahead in fine style after this halt, judging from the enormous quantities of huge logs (three feet long) that were stacked up on the little bridge. Our

entire crew descended and helped with such a will to "coal," that in a very short time the formidable stacks ashore had disappeared.

One helper did not belong to our crew, but had apparently crept up somewhere between the stacks of logs. He was a bare-footed lad with rosy cheeks and flaxen hair, and I should think not more than seven years old. This small morsel of humanity gravely demanded of the captain whether he required an extra hand, and when he was answered in the affirmative, he set to work with a comical seriousness that was delightful to watch. He worked away like a Trojan, and ran to and fro with logs as big as himself. Sometimes he tottered beneath their weight, but his little naked feet gripped the deck with a fierce tenacity, as he regained his equilibrium.

Some ladies on board noticed the plucky little fellow and made a small collection of caramels and pennies, which the captain presented to him on our departure. But the little Hercules became crimson with vexation and stuck his hands in his little knickerbocker pockets with defiance. Those caramels were belittling his manhood, and he resented the attention with all the fierceness of his proud Finnish blood. No persuasion would make him accept them, and eventually the captain gave them in charge to a man standing by.

The scenery after this point became less wild. Scores of miniature islands rested upon the calm waters, each one as perfect in contour as its neighbour. Some were crowned with silver-stemmed birch trees, others with dark solemn firs, but amidst those countless isles not two were exactly alike.

Once we passed a huge float of timber in such close quarters that the waves of our steamer rocked the giant raft gently to and fro. Some sturdy sons of those vast forests and waters, who spend their summers on these floating rafts, waved their caps to us as we passed.

The rafts are sometimes a mile in length and half a mile broad, and consist of several thousand trunks of trees, roughly bound together with chains, which the men have to sever when the waterway is not wide enough to allow the whole float to pass down at a time.

This particular float was the largest I had ever seen, and had upon it miserable wooden huts, not much larger than a dog-kennel, into which the men crept for shelter at nights. Their calling is a very arduous one, but they appeared to be a cheery enough crew.

We answered their salutation with a ringing "Good night." A solitary horse, standing in a most despondent attitude upon the wet timber, returned it with a parting neigh, as if imploring us to come and rescue him from the position he was in much against his will.

Soon afterwards we came to the first cataract that had barred our progress since we left Nyslott. Formerly steamers had been obliged to make a long detour, several miles in length, to avoid this cataract, but a canal has recently been opened which enables all-sized crafts to proceed in a straight course. The first lock was not completed, although it was open for traffic. At the other end an extraordinary sight met the eye, nothing more nor less than a fully

fledged modern villa. A villa with verandas and red awnings in the midst of the wilderness, made me rub my eyes to be sure I was not dreaming.

If I had seen a mother bear and a promising litter of young cubs, I should not have been surprised, but this villa was so utterly at variance with the surroundings that I was completely nonplussed.

I was still more astonished when our steamer moored immediately opposite the villa. On the landing-quay there was a small wooden table, with two drawers, and in front of it stood a kitchen chair. The whole concern looked like a missionary's outfit, or an auctioneer's.

Before I had time to think which entertainment was to take place, a man came slowly down the villa steps towards us. He was below middle height and very spare, with deep-set, piercing eyes, an aquiline nose, and a wealth of snow-white hair, worn somewhat longer than usual.

He returned the salute of the captain as gravely as it was given, and took the newspapers and letters the latter handed to him with due ceremony. Yet he could not conceal the flame of excitement that lit up his dark eyes as he hastily scanned the post, previous to placing it on the table. Then he opened one of the drawers and pulled out an official-looking paper which he handed to the captain, who signed it and returned it with a few coins.

Thus the brief ceremony was concluded. And as it did not tally with either of my previous conceptions, I asked for further enlightenment. I was told that the old gentleman was the newly appointed chief superintendent of the canal, who had to levy a toll of

one mark thirty-five centimes on all vessels passing through the three locks which it contained. Also that he was a celebrity in Finland, the famous Finnish dramatist Gustav von Numers.

I wondered how many of the passengers realized that that sedate, quiet little man had made thousands laugh by his wit. His comedies have been acted in every part of Finland, and bring out the failings and characteristics of his fellow-beings with the sharpness of Ibsen.

Perhaps the best known of his plays is *Bakom Kuopio* (Behind Kuopio), which enjoys an evergreen popularity. It is one of the best comedies that have ever been written, and is descriptive of the life of a little provincial town in the north of Finland. I saw it acted in Helsingfors many years ago, but it is still fresh in my memory.

It seemed a curious thing that a man of his ability should accept such a minor post. The ladies of his family did not appear, but stood the whole time on the veranda watching us with evident interest.

I fear, poor souls, that the arrival of the steamer is the only excitement for them day by day. However, there is excellent salmon fishing in this cataract, and plenty of game in the surrounding forests, so their isolation has its good points to make it bearable.

After we had passed that glimpse of modern life, we entered a very narrow creek, so narrow that the bows of our steamer cut through the masses of yellow water-lilies that fringed the banks on either side. A hill above the golden water-lilies was aglow with countless wild pink phlox, so vividly pink that it seemed as if the sunrise of the early morn had

never left that hill. The contrast between the yellow-starred water and that glorious flush of rose tints was fascinating.

Beyond that creek the water widened considerably, and became so transparent that the filmy white clouds overhead were more distinctly seen beneath the water than in the sky.

It was the sharp clear light that always precedes the mists of evening in the Far North. A haze hid the hills as we entered the second lock. This route has been so recently opened for traffic that the peasants will come long distances to see a boat pass through the locks.

The sun sent a last challenge to the mist-laden hills as we left the second lock. The brilliance of that sunset was alone worth the journey. The water, the trees, the clouds, became as if on fire. And every object, however minute, had its double beneath the surface of the crystalline waters. The slenderest leaf was painted there. A patch of scarlet poppies looked like drops of blood that fell into the white froth of the torrent through which our steamer rushed at full speed, rocking as if in a storm.

In front of us a heavy wooden bridge barred our way, a formidable obstacle that made the speed at which we were going less exhilarating. Suddenly the bridge revolved, and left an open pathway for us to proceed. Two fat little babies waved their hands with frantic excitement from the shore. Then came another unexpected curve, and we entered the third and last lock.

Evidently this was by far the most populated part, and quite a crowd of spectators had gathered

on the banks. The rigorous division of the sexes was very much to the fore here, the lads being on one side of the lock, and the lasses on the other.

There was quite a good-sized village for this part of Finland in close proximity to the lock. No less than nine red-painted cottages gleamed upon the low-lying banks, and all nine of them, exactly the same, stood upon their heads in the water beneath. They were particularly charming cottages. Each had clean white curtains in the windows, and each possessed at least two green plants pressed closely against the latticed panes that never open.

In one cottage I noticed a bird, imprisoned in a white-painted cage. If some one had given that bird his liberty, I wondered in which way he would have flown, because I counted six distinct and separate waterways, branching off in different directions—a bewildering crossway for the uninitiated traveller.

We followed the narrowest path that severed two hills covered with bending trees, that for ever endeavoured to reach each other across the dividing waters. They swept the shores with great overhanging branches that brushed the bulwarks of our steamer as we glided past into a wide circle of open water.

The water widened, and soon only an indistinct mass of green outlined the shadows of the rising night. The sun crept lower and lower into the luminous water, and a wonderful after-glow shed a light around that was almost unearthly in its transcendent clearness.

I put aside my pencil in despair, and was just on the point of tearing up my notes in disgust when the

stewardess—a kind, plain-faced Finnish girl—broke in upon my thoughts by asking if she could bring me a glass of tea.

She looked sympathetically at me. I expect she wondered who was to be the wretched recipient of the voluminous pages I had been writing.

“You like to write?” she asked politely, but questioningly.

“No, I don't,” I replied firmly.

“You can take a walk at Heinaves, our next landing-stage. We shall stop there five hours.”

“Five hours!” I exclaimed, and looked at my watch. It was just ten o'clock.

“It is not much,” she murmured mournfully; “the sailors must sleep somewhere.”

There was a sound argument in what she said. Not even a Finnish sailor can work the whole twenty-four hours of the day. But only in Finland could a passenger steamer go to roost in such a primitive fashion. No doubt it was the mode when the Vikings sailed those seas.

It was close upon eleven p.m. when we arrived at Heinaves, and a good many of the passengers had already retired for the night. But I felt tempted to follow the advice of the little stewardess, and forage out the secrets of the night.

As I stepped on shore the light was just sufficient to lend an air of mystery to the morsel of a village that clambered up a steep hill in front of me. In that light it reminded me of a dear old English village hidden somewhere off the beaten track that I know so well in Kent. The road passed through a farmyard, upon which the hush of night had already settled. A

matronly sow with an astonishingly large family were huddled together in a bed of straw. They looked aggressively comfortable. Beneath the roof of an old shed I saw a row of decapitated fowls, reposing in a straight line, one close to the other, each with its head tucked under a wing.

My eyes fell next on the farmhouse itself. It was a long, rambling, one-storied farmhouse, and from one window the light of a tallow candle shone out into the shadows. There were no blinds to the window, and I could see the interior of the room more distinctly than if I had been indoors myself. It was apparently the living-room. A gleam of burnished copper utensils upon a high-backed dresser gave it a homely appearance, and there was a square wooden trestle-table in the centre of the room. Sitting beside it, bending over an open book, was an old woman, made beautiful by the countless wrinkles that seamed her fine face. It was a face that Rembrandt would have painted—a picture of age, still majestic in its decay. Close to that old woman stood a young girl in the first glory of her youth, straight and upright as a young birch tree. The contrast was violent—the splendid vigour of the young girl made age so helpless. Age is a foe that comes to all. Even that young girl in all her rude health had already passed the border-line, and day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, henceforward that grim shadow would steal an infinitesimal morsel of her bloom.

I turned away, and walked slowly up a path to the left, that led to the village church, built on the summit of a hill. Limitless tracks of forest could be seen by the light of the stars. That sleeping village guarded



PEASANTS SINGING THE OLD RUNES

TO THE
ANGLO-INDIAN

by the little wooden church was so pitiably small and defenceless in comparison.

Out there in the wilderness, bears and wolves still possessed the land. They must have raged at man daring to place his lair in their kingdom. The recently opened canal had been a new key placed into a lock centuries old. But the door of the wilderness is as yet only on the glint.

I was glad when I had made my way back to the steamer. The narrow bunk was preferable to the limitless waste of no man's land.

Probably some one who has never visited Finland will think from my experience so far that summer skies are eternally blue there. I had almost come to that conclusion myself, and felt annoyed to find myself disillusioned. When we left Heinaves the wind was inclined to be angry, and by the time we arrived at Kuopio next morning it had risen to a gale, and the waters were white with the froth of the storm-tossed waves.

My first impression of Kuopio must have been about the same as that of a blind man. A whirlwind of dust flew up to greet me, and blinded me to everything but that I was standing on terra firma.

I was dimly aware that I managed to crawl into an open cab, and that I found myself eventually within the welcome calm of the Societetshuset, where I slowly regained my lost eyesight.

The porter obligingly informed me that a storm like this one I had fallen upon was of the rarest occurrence. The last one that he could remember had taken place more than three years ago. I think he felt proud of its vigour, and spoke of it as if he had

been alluding to a theatrical performance. "The storm three years ago had uprooted several thousand trees in the neighbourhood," he added hopefully. Perhaps with luck the number would be doubled this time; I hoped so for his sake.

Kuopio is quite a good-sized town, considerably larger and more important than any I had visited since I left Viborg, and is one of the best centres for tourists' excursions in that part of Finland. It possesses, of course, the usual wide cobble-stone streets and imposing public buildings of an up-to-date Finnish town.

The governor's residence is quite a palatial affair overlooking the famous Bay of Kuopio. Kuopio is the residential town of the Governor of the Province, and it used formerly to harbour the bishop as well; but since 1900 it has lost the prestige of the bishopric, which during that year was moved to its rival town, Uleaborg.

However, the town continues to prosper, notwithstanding this serious blow to its dignity. It enjoys a considerable export trade, and is particularly renowned for its famous horse-fairs.

The horses of this province have for centuries enjoyed the reputation for being the best in Finland. This special breed is noted for its hardiness and speed, as well as its beauty, and this combined with extraordinary sagacity and gentleness are sufficient reasons for the demand that has always existed for them.

Unfortunately some years back Russian blood was introduced to this famous race, very much to its detriment. But still, as a good, all-round, hardy

little horse, it would be difficult to beat. "Go as the wind, or a Kuopio horse," is a well-known Finnish saying.

Formerly the rich peasant farmers in the neighbourhood of Kuopio vied with each other in the excellence of their horses. Their horses were as dear to them as their children, and the zenith of enjoyment was reached when they flew through their villages in their gaily decorated sleighs, with splendid harnesses, glittering with silver ornaments and swinging bells.

All their wealth was spent on these gorgeous trappings, which have now for the greater part disappeared. A few examples are still seen on festival days, probably handed down as heirlooms in the same family for generations.

This particular corner of Finland has always been more well-to-do than its neighbours. The land has for centuries been occupied by rich peasant farmers, who would scorn to have anything but solid silver in their cupboards, and silk raiment for their wives to wear on Sundays and holidays. Good rum and solid food could be found in most homesteads, and their hospitality was always readily extended to any stranger who might happen to sojourn in their midst.

All this was in the "good old times." Nowadays, alas! the "peasant king" has passed away.

Kuopio has no historical annals to be proud of, it is essentially a trading centre. The plan of the town was laid down in the reign of Gustavus III. of Sweden, in 1776. To tempt people to come and inhabit the newly made township, the King

issued an edict giving it immunity from all taxes for the period of twenty-five years. Unfortunately those halcyon days have long since passed, and Kuopio now enjoys the same taxation as the rest of the country.

The cathedral was built in the beginning of the last century. From the tower a grand view of the town and surrounding district is obtained, otherwise it does not attract attention.

However, the charm of Kuopio rests entirely with the many delightful excursions in the neighbourhood. Amongst them is the celebrated hill of Puijo, over nine hundred and fifty feet above the sea; on the summit of the hill a lofty round tower of stone has been erected, from which one of the finest panoramic views in Finland is to be seen.

The tower appears an alarming height seen from below, but it possesses particularly easy stairs, so that the least intrepid of climbers can without difficulty mount them. It is considered a serious offence by the inhabitants of Kuopio for a stranger to be there more than three hours without visiting Puijo hill. They look upon it with the same pride as if they had built it.

My tempestuous greeting had made me little inclined to venture out-of-doors again that morning, the more so as the recently opened hotel was exceedingly comfortable, with spacious, well-furnished rooms and an excellent restaurant.

However, the storm had soon abated somewhat, and before I had time to think the matter over, I found myself being ushered into a waiting droschka by the jubilant porter.



KUOPIO, VIEW FROM THE PUIJO HILL

No direction was given, at least I heard none. But the driver set off at a furious pace, as if he and his horse had no doubt of the matter.

The storm, I found, had only abated a fraction, and the little horse most gallantly fought his way in the teeth of the wind up an interminably long road. On a fair day it would doubtless have been charming, as the road ascended through a forest carpeted with bracken and countless varieties of moss. The view at the top was certainly marvellous, and repaid the steep pull up.

On our way back to the hotel we made a circuit of the town. I remember two things: one was the busy market-place down by the shore, and the other was a small wooden house where Minna Canth, the cobbler's wife and mother of innumerable children, wrote her wonderfully clever dramas. These plays created a veritable sensation during the close of the last century.

One of the most famous of them describes a young wife, ill-mated, falling hopelessly in love with a student who comes to reside with them. Thinking that the student would marry her if she were free, she deliberately poisons her husband. In the last act we see the wretched woman in prison, waiting her trial as a murderess. The student comes to visit her, and—brings with him the girl he is just engaged to be married to. The theme is horrible, and yet it grips one with its cynical realism.

Her other plays are all more or less equally morbid and powerful. The work, not of a man nor of a woman, but of a Genius! Found in many forms, but surely in none stranger than this woman of the people?

CHAPTER XII

New railway to Kajana—Old style of travelling—Fine engineering—The passing of cultivation—Endless forests—A lonely homestead—The dawn of a new day—The largest province in Finland—Risen from the sea—The fighting propensities of the people—Romantic legends—Ancient stronghold of the gods—The paradise of anglers—Direct routes from London—Rough estimate of expenses—A Noah's Ark minus Mrs. Noah—Limited accommodation—A lucky find—A hostess in distress—I reconnoitre Kajana—A progressing town—America in Finland—View of the Uleå River—The Castle of Kajana—A memorable siege—A brief return of past glory—Deepest lock in Europe—A tug of war—Magnificent courage and physique of the men—A rainbow—Forgotten giants—A well-known sportsman—A record afternoon's sport—The aroma of coffee.

“THE daily train for Kajana leaves at 12.15 in the afternoon.” A very ordinary speech, one would think. Yet I could hardly believe I had heard aright. It was only a few years—at the most a decade—since I had journeyed for the first time to Kajana, and the memory of that journey is still with me. The very idea of a railway to Kajana had not been mooted then, and a traveller had to content himself with a steamer as far as Isalmi, and to post from there in the roughest of peasant carts, innocent of springs or cushions.

In this conveyance tourists had to pass the best part of three days, resting for the nights in the

horrible posting inns, which were then considered sufficiently luxurious for any one mad enough to essay that journey.

Autres temps, autres mœurs! For once I felt grateful to modern inventions.

Can the gigantic expense of this line to Kajana ever be repaid? It was only opened for traffic in 1904. Travellers as yet are few and far between, if the day I travelled be any criterion.

Kajana to me spelt salmon-fishing, and the starting-point for descending the cataracts of the Uleå River.

On leaving Kuopio the first piece of engineering that strikes the eye of the traveller on the new railway is the stupendous stone embankment built right across the centre of Kallavesi Bay, over six thousand feet in length.

The storm of the day before still ruffled the water, and the white-tipped waves on either side of the low-lying embankment sent their spray right across the line. At times it looked as if the train was running along the surface of the water.

Several sailing-boats came quite close to us, mostly peasant craft loaded with divers merchandise for the Kuopio market.

No true son of Finland ever lowered his dignity by looking astonished, but I thought some of them looked rather nonplussed as we skidded past on the foam-specked waves of Kallavesi which had by right of centuries belonged to them.

When we at length reached the shore our way was barred by a high cliff of granite, through which a passage has been cut, allowing the train to continue

its progress. Coming suddenly from the blazing light of the open water, it was like entering a dark cave. The single line of the railway seemed as if it would be crushed between the towering walls of stone on either side.

I think that solemn mountain passage is in a way the dividing line between the cultivated land and the barren wilderness. For after that I noticed a great difference in the vegetation. The luxuriant growth that had been so evident on the way from Nyslott to Kuopio was no longer to be seen.

Yesterday Nature was lavish in her verdant colour effects, and life was a joy to every living thing. To-day the shadow of the great struggle was already present. Mile by mile it became heavier and darker. The shadow stunted the trees, endless forests of grim mournful firs, which stood immovable in their serried rows, watching the black iron monster that had cut a vein right through their heart's blood.

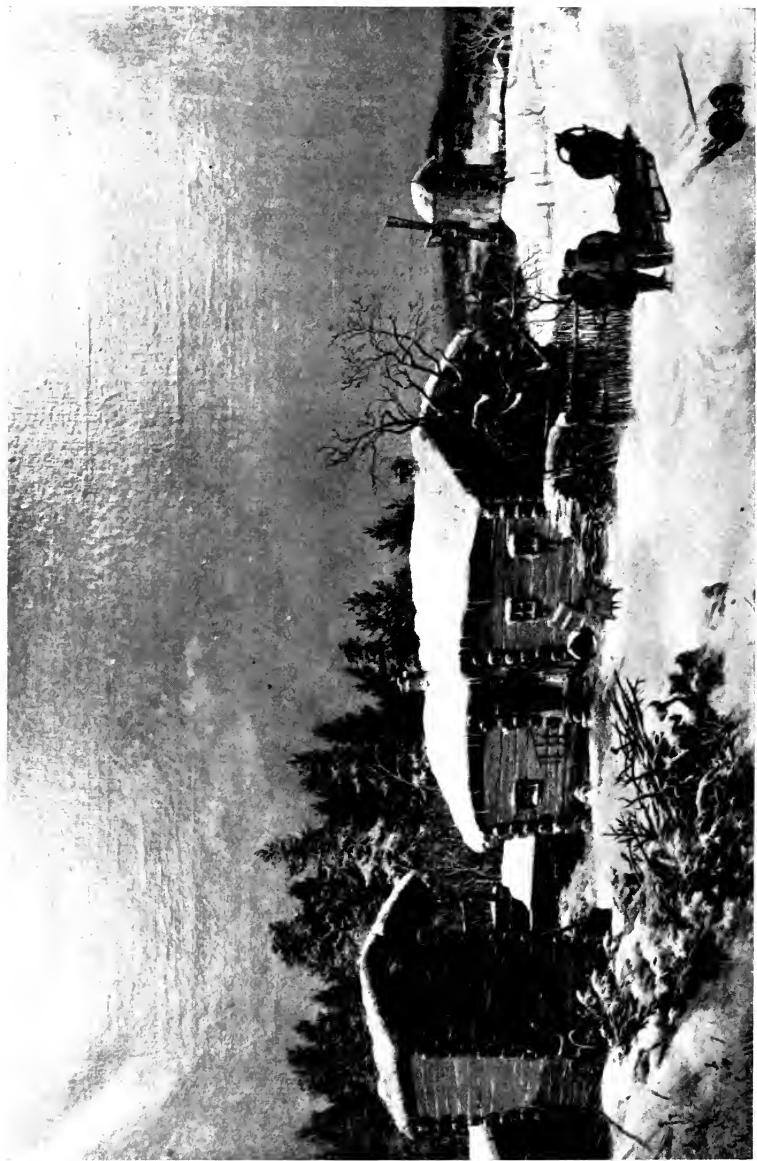
We had left the land of water, and only vast stretches of forest rolled away on either side, with the same monotony as a limitless sea.

The absence of human life gave an overpowering sadness to the wounded forest, that had so recently awakened from centuries of sleep and solitude. It still looked heavy-eyed and defiant.

The thunder of the train re-echoed back through the awful silence, like the scream of a thousand evil spirits pursuing the thing that had dared to break their peace.

Now and again after long intervals we came to one of the platforms erected along the line for the employees of the railway, where we took in fresh

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FINNISH COTTAGE IN WINTER

fuel and water. Those platforms were like an oasis in the desert. Each possessed a little dwelling-house so new that the paint was still being put on some of them.

Close to one of these solitary links with the world, I saw in a clearing of the forest the first cottage I had seen since we left Isalmi, the last village of importance before entering the wilderness. It was one of the ordinary log-built cottages to be seen all over Finland, with brightly painted red walls, black roof, and snow-white window frames.

On the threshold of the open door a young mother was standing with a babe at her breast. She leant forward eagerly, as if the sight of the train brought back to her memory the world from which she was exiled. Then she bent down her fair head and smiled at her babe. That strong young mother was the pioneer of a rising day. When many winter snows have whitened her hair, and her babe has become a full-grown man, that solitary cottage will be the oldest homestead of a prosperous village, and open fields may replace the encircling woods.

As the train sped on, the memory of that lonely cottage shed a sheen like the first gleam of dawn through the darkness of the forest. It was the break of a coming day, and already the forest felt the approach of the hidden sun of prosperity.

But I was glad that I had seen it once again in all its majesty of untrammelled freedom, alone in its poverty, and alone in its wealth.

This northerly district of Österbotten is by far the largest of the seven provinces into which

Finland is divided, and alone measures over 3769 square miles. Some idea of the size of this province can be gathered from the fact that it is larger than the whole of Prussia, Bavaria, and Saxony put together. Its boundaries in the north are Lapland and the Arctic circle, in the east the northern part of Russia towards the White Sea, in the south Central Finland, and in the west the Gulf of Bothnia and the Swedish coast. The whole of this immense tract of land is over-run with marshes, endless forests, and mighty rivers. The coast-line is practically the only part that is cultivated or inhabited.

It is said that the greater part of this land was once the bottom of the sea, and perhaps nowhere in the world can this be more easily proved. Even now it is year by year rising above the sea-level. Old men can remember places where they put out their fishing-nets in their youth, that are now transformed into green fields. Villages that two hundred years ago possessed considerable ports, have now to anchor their craft a distance of three miles away. Even high up in the interior of the land, ancient bits of iron and wreckage have been found in the marshes.

Inland all cultivation is difficult, which the darkness of the long winters helps to account for.

North of Uleåborg, orchard fruits do not ripen, but there are quantities of luscious wild fruits which are only to be found in the far north of Finland.

Formerly whales and seals were plentiful, but have now been almost exterminated by too zealous

hunters. Fish is still the principal food of the people, and their great rivers are renowned for their splendid salmon-fishing.

If this province is the poorest in cultivation, it is also the richest in mineral wealth. Gold, silver, iron, and copper are all found here. Rock crystals and garnets are to be found everywhere, and pearls are not uncommon.

The whole of Österbotten slopes towards the coast-line and the Gulf of Bothnia, into which it empties its numerous rivers and streams.

The very character of the people in this province is curiously unlike that of the rest of their compatriots. It is as if the sons of this wild district had got something of the same spirit of lawlessness and force as their giant rivers that fight their way to the coast.

The Österbotten peasants are an essentially fighting race, and for the least thing they will use their sharp knives, which are carried by old and young alike in every part of the province.

These knives are in the form of a dagger hidden in a leather sheath, which is attached to their waist by a heavy girdle of hammered brass. The pride of an Österbotten lad is the notch that is marked on the blade of his knife, which is the sign of how much steel he has borne without flinching. This perilous game, which sometimes ends fatally, is played by his companions thrusting the knife into the least vulnerable part of his body.

With this highly developed fighting instinct the honesty of their race is such that a traveller could leave his purse on the high-road and find it untouched the following day.

Many tales are told of this corner of the Far North. It is said that Orpheus, a hundred years before the Trojan wars (1300 B.C.), sailed along their coast. They also affirm that this was the original land of the Amazons, who had reigned here many centuries before the birth of Christ. It was here, amongst the strongholds of the immortal gods, that the ancient Greeks found their wisdom and the knowledge of their souls' immortality. All this and more has been said of this vast wilderness which borders the land of eternal snow.

The origin of these tales is as unknown as the breath of the polar winds that speed down to-day from the still unconquered North. They add to the glamour and mystery which make a tour in Finland a welcome change from the ordinary routine of a summer holiday.

Österbotten is the paradise of anglers, and, needless to say, for those only in search of salmon-fishing it would be unnecessary to make a detour as I did to reach it. There is a direct train from Helsingfors to Kajana, the headquarters of the salmon fisheries, with good sleeping accommodation.

Roughly, the whole trip from London to Kajana could be done in six days *viâ* Hull, or one day less if the first part of the journey is overland *viâ* Flushing to Copenhagen, and thence by the Finnish mail steamers to Helsingfors. A still shorter route would be by the northern express from Ostend to St. Petersburg, and from there to Helsingfors and Kajana.

But the latter route is more than double the expense of the first one, which is exceedingly moderate.

The first-class return fare from Hull to Helsingfors, including food, is only £10, and the tickets are available for six months. I forget what the cost of the journey is from Helsingfors to Kajana, but railway travelling in the Grand Duchy is less expensive than in any other European country.

The cost of a single ticket from Kuopio to Kajana is, for example, under 12s., and the steamers are even more moderate. The fare from Nyslott to Kuopio by water was only the astonishingly small sum of 5s., six marks twenty-five centimes in Finnish currency. This did not include provisions, which are always paid for separately.

I happen to have made a note of these two items in my pocket-book, so I know they are correct. My usual way of doing accounts when travelling is to turn out my money from my pocket and see what I've got to go on with.

The above is the only note I made during my whole journey. I remember I felt inordinately proud of it, and headed the page with the bold inscription of "Travelling Expenses in Finland."

I was just contemplating the suggestiveness of that headline when we arrived at our destination.

The railway-station at Kajana is a delightfully primitive affair, and reminded me of a spick and span Noah's Ark. I was disappointed not to see Mrs. Noah emerge from its brilliantly painted red door. I had to console myself by seeing Mrs. Noah's youngest son crying on the doorstep. The few moments that I devoted to observing his emotions nearly incurred my return to the Noah's Ark in search of shelter for the night. My driver was aware

evidently of this danger, for he exerted himself to outdistance every other vehicle. It was like Roman chariot-racing. The way we turned the corners was amazing, and the way we escaped disaster miraculous.

I think four cabs originally entered the lists, but only two finished, and I regret to say my rival cab won by a short head. The reason of this unexpected sport was soon apparent. The landlady of the tourist hotel admitted the victor, but firmly refused to take in any further arrivals. Kajana was enjoying the height of her season, and hotels were full up. With lessened speed the plucky little horse, steaming with his well-meant endeavours to give me the first chance, turned away from the inhospitable walls of the tourists' hotel.

There are two other inns of humbler rank in the town, but the same answer was forthcoming in both instances. There seemed nothing to do but to return to the station.

On the way from the Noah's Ark I had noticed a row of newly built houses containing far and away the finest flats in Kajana.

Those flats looked extraordinarily enticing to a traveller without a roof above his head. The windows were lofty and the blinds systematically straight and clean. Those who hesitate are lost. I boldly besieged one of the doors, and gained admittance. The outside did not half do justice to the interior. Through a vista of many open doors I saw a glimmer of yellow hangings that decorated the end room.

From this sunny apartment a lady came towards me. She was graciousness itself, and listened

sympathetically to my woes. Then she called her husband, and explained the situation to him in a few words. Almost before I had time to express my gratitude, I found myself the possessor of that charming yellow room.

I vow no man could wish for a better refuge for the night, it was as delightful as it was unexpected. Mine hostess brought me in herself a fragrant cup of coffee, and hoped I would be comfortable.

The only stipulation she made was that I should take my meals at the hotel, as her kitchen was under repair. The dear lady!—I shall always remember her kindness with gratitude.

That room of sunshine made me all but forget that I had come to Kajana to see the place, and I realized I was wasting my time in a reckless manner. So I threw down the Helsingfors daily paper that I was reading, and sauntered forth on a tour of inspection.

Curiously enough, although I had visited the place before, it brought back no recollections of the past to me. The country village that I faintly remembered seemed to have expanded to double the size.

The main street had been paved with large cobble stones, and there were actually several shops to be seen, where anything from home-made hjortron jam (prepared from the delicious wild fruit of that name which grows in the surrounding forests) to a ready-made pair of trousers could be bought.

I resisted the trousers, but I succumbed to the jam. The fruit in shape is like an immense raspberry, and was the same colour as the yellow hangings of

my room, and looked almost too good to eat as the storekeeper ladled it out to me.

Jam is sold by weight in Finland. The proprietress was generously inclined, and the scales went down a good bit beyond the weight I had asked for.

I must not forget to mention that in one of the stores I was asked "what my pleasure was" in the most fluent American-English imaginable. I was quite startled, it was so wholly unexpected in this remote corner of Europe. The speaker was a thorough type of an up-to-date American girl, with a certain swagger and smartness of attire and deportment that is utterly unknown in the usual Finnish girl of her class. I asked her if she was an American, and was laughingly replied to in the negative. Her parents, who owned the store, had migrated "out West" when she was an infant, and the family had only recently returned to their native shores. The mother funnily enough could not speak a word of English. "I guess mother never cared to learn," the daughter said proudly. The aloofness of the Finnish character was brought home to me very forcibly. To have been over sixteen years in a foreign country and not to have learnt a word of the language, or in any way to have altered her individuality as a Finnish woman, was only possible in one of her race. Judging at least from her appearance she might have been all her life at that little store in Kajana. She seemed indifferent to my conversation, and occupied herself by serving another customer. But I caught now and again a furtive glance of admiration at her handsome daughter.

Kajana, as seen from the village street, has a sedate, old-fashioned look that in no way prepares one for the magnificent effect of the giant river and thundering waterfall which are completely hidden by the low wooden houses until the corner of the street is turned. The picture that reveals itself so suddenly is one of the grandest sights in Europe.

The mighty Uleå River, which rushes down from the wilderness of Northern Russia towards the Gulf of Bothnia, is seen here in its wildest mood. The crested waves that surge round the ruined castle of Kajana, standing upon a solitary island in their midst, are never still. Summer and winter pass by like phantoms without leaving a trace of their presence upon those storm-tossed waves, that gather in their legions below the castle, to hurl themselves down the terrible cataract a few yards further on. The terrific force of the maddened waters sends a spray of snow-white foam that rises higher than the roofs of the few cottages which are built upon the high-lying banks of the river.

The old castle of Kajana has known many stirring episodes in its day. It was, together with the castles of Viborg and Nyslott, one of the foremost protectors of the country. The fortress of Kajana, as it was called in the Middle Ages, was built by order of Charles IX. of Sweden in the latter part of the sixteenth century.

Men built it, and men destroyed it. Time alone would not have left any mark on those massive stone walls, of which we see only a remnant to-day.

The last memorable siege of the grand old castle took place in 1715, when the Russian troops,

numbering over four thousand under the command of General Tschedin, stormed the fortress.

The castle garrison was under the command of Major Fieandt the governor, and consisted of only fifty men, besides a number of women and children, who on the approach of the Russian army had fled from the village to seek shelter within the walls of their stronghold.

For over a month that little garrison held out against the attack of the enemy. By night and day during that period a ceaseless cannonade was levelled upon the castle walls. Yet so massively were they constructed that they remained intact, and not one of the garrison was killed.

Hunger it was that conquered in the end, and Major Fieandt was at length obliged to capitulate on account of the women and children.

Immediately after the forlorn little garrison had marched out, the Russian general, enraged at the sight of that handful of defenders who had dared to resist his august will all those weeks, commanded that their so-called impregnable fortress should be blown up before their eyes. Great barrels of gunpowder were placed within the castle and exploded by the Russian troops. The sound of that terrific explosion was said to have been heard a distance of fifty miles off, and will be always remembered by the inhabitants of Kajana when they look upon the shattered walls of their erstwhile splendid castle.

It is to-day exactly the same as when the Russians left it, close on two hundred years ago.

Many romances are told of the old castle, and it

was here that the well-known historian, Messenius, was imprisoned for over nineteen years.

Kajana lost all its importance with the fall of its fortress, and became overlooked and forgotten. It had, however, a brief reminder of its former glory when the stupendous lock below the famous falls was opened in state by the governor of the province, on September 2, 1846, in the presence of a notable gathering of representatives from all parts of the country. They came to do honour to the engineer who had accomplished the colossal task of making that section of the river navigable for the numerous tar-boats which descend the Uleå River in the summer months.

The lock is fifty feet in length, and no less than thirty-two feet in depth, and I think this, as far as depth goes, is unique.

On that inaugural day, over fifty years ago, eighteen tar-boats passed safely through the lock. It was indeed a festive day for little Kajana. In the evening a huge ball to celebrate the event took place at the Assembly Rooms, and the historic castle ruins were illuminated by immense barrels of burning tar, that lit up the surging waters around with the brightness of day.

When I saw the old castle it was wrapped in the shadow of evening storm-clouds which darkened the water and its ruined walls. The suddenness of the storm was amazing. I was halfway across the long wooden bridge that now-a-days connects the castle with the two opposite shores of the river, when a sheet of torrential rain struck the hard boards like the feet of a pursuing army.

I was almost deafened with the force of the storm and the roar of the waters, when all at once I heard the voices of men raised in a song of unison, that rang out above the raging elements.

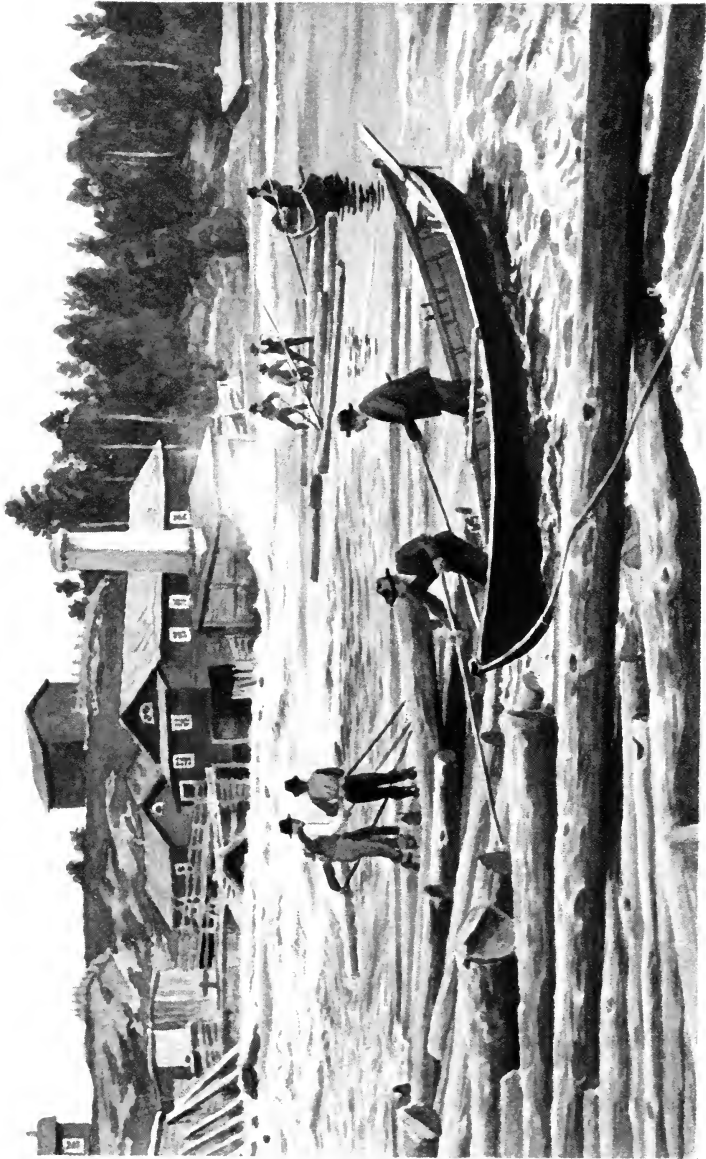
Farther down the bridge I saw about a dozen great strong fellows having a tug of war with some unseen object in the waters below.

The stout rope they held looked as inflexible as a rod of iron with the strain put upon it. I leant over the bridge to see what they were pulling at. A sight met my eyes that for sheer recklessness was appalling! Below, in the surging waters, an immense quantity of floating timber had got wedged together beneath the supports of the bridge. Giant trees, fifty feet in height, were sucked down in the midst of the whirlpool, as if they had been bits of straw. The strength of the waters jammed the masses of imprisoned wood into one shivering heap, and upon this moving jumble men were working at the risk of their lives.

They endeavoured to force the giant logs asunder, with the long iron implements they held. But the resistance of the water was so great, that the united strength of the men failed to move one of the logs around which their rope had been made fast.

A blue-eyed boy, of Herculean build, hurled a gleaming axe above his head and cut in twain an intervening bit of timber.

The whole of the shivering structure moved, and at length the giant log broke away. Once freed, it dashed down towards the cataract on the other side of the bridge and was lost in a mist of foam. As the men liberated, one by one, those enormous logs, they sang aloud. It was a song of courage. One false step and



KAJANA, FLOATING TIMBER



certain death lay before them. The boy I had noticed before looked up and smiled at me. His brow was wet with the sweat of his labour, and for a moment he turned his face towards the spray of the whirlpool to cool his heated brow. Then, with renewed vigour, he grasped his axe and recommenced his work.

Just as suddenly as the storm had come over those struggling men, so it passed away. A veil of gossamer mists, tinted in rose, was slowly drawn across the sky. The rose deepened by degrees into red, lighting up the ruined walls of the old castle and the surface of the water with touches of crimson. The effect was magical. And while I looked through the gaps in the reddened walls I saw the outline of the rainbow. It hung just above those brave men like a triumphal arch, raised in their honour.

They are indeed a splendid race of men. One of their forefathers, by name Daniel Cajanus, who was born in the beginning of the eighteenth century, measured over eight feet in height. He died in 1749, at the age of forty-six, at Haarlem, whither he had been brought over to be shown for money.

On my way back I stopped for a moment at the house of Mr. H. Renfors, a gentleman who is as well known all over Finland as he is in Kajana. He is justly considered one of the finest sportsmen of his day, and what Mr. Renfors does not know about salmon-fishing is certainly not worth knowing.

He has been of incalculable help to all English anglers who come to Kajana, as he speaks English perfectly and is always ready with his advice to strangers. He has also invented some special salmon

flies, which have earned a reputation for excellence all over the country.

They can be bought in Helsingfors, but it is best to select them under the guidance of the inventor in the little shop at Kajana, which is always the meeting-place of anglers. Fishing tackle of all kinds can also be procured here, as well as many necessities required by those intending to camp out lower down the river.

That the Uleå River is a paradise for anglers can be seen by the photograph Mr. Renfors gave me, showing the result of one afternoon's sport, when no less than one hundred grayling, weighing from four to six pounds each, were caught by two rods, an Englishman and his wife who were spending some weeks at Kajana last summer (1906).

Mr. Renfors has built himself a charming villa overlooking his beloved river. He received me most affably. I could only express my sincere regret that I could not accept his kind offer to try my luck with the rod the following day, as I had, unfortunately, to continue my journey to Uleåborg.

The tourist boats for descending the rapids go only twice a week, and to-morrow was the day. During the summer season, places in this boat are usually booked well ahead, as the boats can only take a limited number of passengers. Otherwise, if the tourist boat is full, intending travellers would have to content themselves with a place in one of the ordinary tar-boats, that until quite recently were the only means of descending the Uleå River.

I slept splendidly in my yellow apartment that night, but, as there were no blinds, the sun woke me



AN AFTERNOON'S SPORT AT KAJANA.



somewhat earlier than I wished. Through the open window I could hear that another day had begun. The workmen, who were making a new road just below, had already recommenced their day's work, although the hour was only three a.m. The monotonous thud of their old-fashioned implements, with which they forced the cobble stone into the ground, sent me to sleep again.

The next time I awoke it was with a delicious aroma of freshly roasted coffee that came from the adjoining room.

A few moments later a bare-footed Finnish maid brought me in a tray on which reposed a burnished copper coffee kettle with a massive silver sugar basin and cream ewer, and a lavishly piled dish of home-made rolls. "Good morning," she murmured, in a terror-struck voice. Her naked feet disappeared for a second beneath her short print dress as she bobbed and placed the tray hurriedly on the table beside me. Then she fled from the room.

CHAPTER XIII

A promise—The first excitement—Sour grapes—A pond—The village of Pollyvaara—Lönrot's cottage—A falling cemetery—A courageous Emperor—A journey a hundred years ago—Our first landing-stage—Gallant sailors—The approach of the cataracts—Waala, the village of the stream—Waiting tar-boats—The pilots—A luxurious boat—The first cataract—A rush through the water—Sudden storm—A shelter by the way—Journey continued—In sight of Pyhakoski—A dangerous cataract—Thrilling descent—The rock of the giants—Exquisite river scenery—Beyond the beaten track—Arrival at Muhos—Evening lights upon the water—Good night to our pilot.

I DOUBT if a man or woman exists who would not feel a thrill of excitement on boarding the little steamer at Kajana for the descent of the famous cataracts of the Uleå River, the first step to the real climax to a holiday in Finland. To those who have never done so, I can promise a rare pleasure in store for them—an experience which for excitement and novelty is unsurpassed.

The promise of the early morning was fulfilled, and as I drove from the hospitable doors of my kind hosts, the sun danced down the long narrow streets of Kajana with a reckless gaiety that was infectious.

I had never felt in better spirits, and I don't think anything or anybody could have put me in a bad temper that morning. Not even if my rival

—confound him!—had won a smile from my lady love.

Excitement began early on that memorable trip. The landing-bridge for the steamer, which during the summer makes a daily voyage between Kajana and Waala, was about half a mile from the village, below the falls and lock.

The road skirts the edge of the river, and one can see through an intervening screen of trees a glimpse of the wide-stretched waters that divide the river between Kajana and Waala. The descent to the steamer is so steep that the narrow road appears like an upright ladder, and I wondered if even a Finnish horse could accomplish the task of going down it without breaking its knees.

My horse was a nailer; he not only did it, but did it with a rush that all but landed us in the water. It was the narrowest escape from an undesired bath I have ever had. Even the driver looked a shade surprised. Then he got down from his box and patted his horse affectionately. Certainly it was a trick few horses would have been capable of. The horse was a particularly good-looking one—a well-set-up chestnut pony, with flowing mane and tail of silvery white that contrasted almost ludicrously with his red body. His blinkerless eyes were bright and mischievous; I never saw a pony so pleased with himself. With a sudden impulse I asked the owner what he would sell him for. "Sell him? I don't sell my horse," he replied, in about the same tone as if I had asked him to sell his wife. After that, he eyed me suspiciously until the steamer started. Once out upon the water, I ceased to regret the

red-and-white pony; probably he would have been a white elephant in England. "Sour grapes," said the fox!

There were not many passengers on board, and I wondered which of them would be my companions down the cataracts. We had an intermediate four hours before we reached Waala, so probably they would have dwindled to a still smaller number by then.

I knew, however, that our stopping-places would be few, as we were crossing the vast "Uleå Träsk" midway, without touching the shores. Finnish people have an odd way of naming things. Amongst the most misleading that I met during my journey was that of "träsk"—the equivalent of "pond"—as applied to this sea, measuring over eighty miles in length, with an area of nine hundred and forty-eight miles; "träsk" being a name that I had hitherto associated with ducks and hawthorn trees.

I expect, in Finland, they must have been at a loss sometimes to ring the changes when naming their countless waters, and so this intervening sea that links the two parts of the great Uleå River will always be known as the Uleå pond. However, it is nice to excel, and Uleå Träsk can pride itself on being the largest pond in the world.

On leaving Kajana, the steamer follows the right shore for some time, and one obtains a fine view of Wuokatti, the highest hill in the district, eight hundred feet above the level of the water, on the summit of which people affirm there are lakes containing a species of strange unknown fish. Also, it is said that Wuokatti emits deep rumbling noises to warn the

inhabitants of the district of a coming pestilence or famine. However, when I passed it, it looked peaceful enough, with a haze of white clouds above it that looked like a crown of snow.

Another hill in close proximity to Kajana, that is well worth the trouble of an ascent if you have the time to spare, is the green-clad mountain of Pollyvaara. The Tourist Club of Finland have recently erected a hut and a tower on its summit.

Below the hill, in the valley of the sun, stands the cottage in which Lõnnrot lived, the collector of Finland's great epic poem "Kaleva," and in which he commenced his great task of love. Here it was that he used to play the ancient instrument of his country, the kantele, and dream of the poetry that lay hidden in the hearts of the people.

Presently we sighted an idyllic island that must have been thrown upon the waters by some fairy hand, so light and feathery were the trees that grew upon it, and the greenest and most velvety moss carpeted it. This island is called "Lycksalighetens Ö," which means the Isle of Happiness. I don't know which I think the most beautiful, the island or the name.

As if to remind us that of all things happiness is the most fleeting, the next thing our steamer passed was a forgotten garden of the dead. The waves had undermined the crumbling sandstone cliffs upon which it was built, and the greater part of the tombs had already sunk into the water, and the few remaining ones were hovering over the edge, held back by the outstretched arms of tottering trees that vainly endeavour to keep them from their fate.

I wondered who had been buried in that cemetery by the sea. It must always have been remote and beyond the track of life. No village could be seen, and there was nothing to show that death had a right to claim a foothold there.

Homesteads are few and far between in this desolate region, and even a single cottage is a welcome sight.

Attached to one of these poor homes is the famous stable where once an emperor ate his dinner, in default of a better room.

This well-known incident took place during the memorable journey of Alexander I. of Russia, Finland's first Grand Duke, who, in the year 1819, travelled through these far-away tracts of his new duchy.

Many are the stories which are still told of his kindness and generosity.

It was late in August when the Emperor arrived by road from Isalmi to Kajana, accompanied only by his aide-de-camp, Prince Wolkonski, and a young Finnish officer, Captain Gripenberg, to continue his journey to Uleåborg by water.

The lateness of the season was not propitious for descending the cataracts, and the Emperor was advised not to do so.

But nothing would make him alter the journey he had planned. The start was, therefore, made in the most reliable boat that could be found, manned by eight oarsmen and the steersman, who has the sole control of the boat during the actual descent of the cataract.

The slight wind of the morning rose to a storm

when going down the first cataract, and about half-way down it seemed as if the fragile boat must founder. Even the steersman, who had steered hundreds of boats to safety, paled with the tension of that moment.

The Emperor looked at him quietly. "Are you afraid?" he demanded quietly. "Only on account of your Majesty," the steersman replied. "Be as calm as if the Emperor were not with you. In danger we are all equals," was the historic answer.

The cataract was safely got through, but the storm so increased in fury that the Imperial party were obliged to land before descending the second cataract, and had to go by foot a distance of fifty miles through untrodden forests.

Not for two days did the Emperor arrive at Uleåborg, which was illuminated in his honour, and where an enthusiastic welcome awaited him. In those far-off days, with no possibility of communication, the retarded arrival of the Emperor had raised the greatest anxiety as to his safety.

His goodness and chivalry have left their imprint even to this day. Everywhere he allowed the people to approach freely to his person, and so kind was his glance that women put their babies in his arms and touched his clothes.

He was called "the gentle Emperor." I think he also deserves to be known as "the brave Emperor." We can hardly imagine the fatigue and hardships of such a journey as his through the north of Finland close on a hundred years ago. There were practically no roads. Inns were an unheard-of luxury. Private residences did not exist in these parts. An isolated

peasant farmhouse or a parsonage were the best quarters that could be found; and yet, in the face of these difficulties, not the loneliest district was omitted in the tour.

I had let my thoughts sail away so completely that the sudden stopping of the steamer awoke me abruptly from my dreams of the past. The place we stopped at owned to the easy little name of "Sjäräisniemi." It consisted of a handful of cottages and a landing-bridge, built on the edge of a wooded peninsular that jutted far out into the water.

It seemed quite a novelty to see trees again, because, unlike any other inland sea that I know of in Finland, the wide sweep of waters which we had just crossed were almost entirely without those wooded islets and creeks that are, as a rule, such a distinctive feature of Finnish waters. During the greater part of the voyage, only an unbroken expanse of water could be seen, and at times the shores were not in sight. Most of the passengers landed here.

An amusing incident that occurred here shows how little Finns value time. The captain had given orders to remove the gangway, and we were well out upon the water again, when a young peasant girl, who had been talking to two admiring swains, suddenly became aware that the receding bridge was the one she ought to have landed on. Her distress was quickly allayed, because the captain had the steamer stopped and a boat lowered to take her ashore.

Two of the crew were deputed to row her safely to land. The recent shower had filled the boat with water, and the girl appeared much more overcome by

the fear of getting her best Sunday frock spoilt than delaying the steamer. She lifted her gown as carefully as a Parisian; it was certainly a wonderful creation, in a shade of green never invented by God. She was a distinctly pretty girl, a fact which made the rowing harder than it should have been—to me, at least, the boat seemed to take an unconscionable time to get to shore. The two sailors most gallantly lifted her up on the high bridge, where she stood and waved her thanks with the airs of a duchess.

Very soon after that little interlude we sighted the red-painted cottages of Waala. A ripple hurried the steamer towards the landing-bridge, and a dull roar in the distance gave warning of the troubled waters of the great cataract.

The little harbour of Waala was crowded with numerous tar-boats, patiently waiting their turn to be steered down the "stream," as the people love to call their mighty river.

Only professional steersmen are allowed to take the boats down the cataracts. They are a fine race of men, born and bred within the sound of their stream, and, from their earliest youth, they have been taught by their fathers to follow their precarious calling.

To steer a boat down the cataracts of the Uleå River requires an iron nerve and coolness. One instant of indecision would not only be death to themselves, but to all the lives committed to their charge. A boat that has foundered in that stream is lost beyond all hope. Sometimes an accident occurs, but only at rarest intervals, and day by day during the summer hundreds of boats are steered to safety.

The boats have been made on the same model for centuries. The first impression they give is a resemblance to an immensely long gondola; but, seen close, they are much narrower.

The dimensions of an ordinary boat are forty-two feet in length and only three feet three inches in width, with the same measurement in depth. They are, considering their length, surprisingly light, the wood having to be so thin as to be pliable, and no nails or iron are allowed in the construction. The planks are securely bound with stout wood fibre, which is the only thing that could successfully resist the terrific force of the current.

A boat when loaded will take each journey from twenty to twenty-six barrels of tar. They are placed, one after the other, in the bottom of the boat, which, when laden, is only a few inches above the water level.

The crew, as a rule, consist of two men in the bow and two women amidships, who row during the intervening bits of calm water that occur between the cataracts. The steersman occupies alone the stern.

In the midst of the waiting tar-boats at Waala I quickly distinguished the boat we were to make the descent in. In form it was the same as the others, but her sides had been painted a brilliant red, and where the tar-barrels ought to have been seats had been placed for passengers.

The new boat appeared quite luxurious compared to the very cramped and dirty quarters to be had on an ordinary tar-boat, which, until quite recently, had been the only means available for descending the river.

After some delay in landing and getting our luggage packed into the limited space allowed for it, we were at length ready for the start. By the way, only the smallest quantity of luggage is allowed per passenger. Heavy luggage, if required, has to be sent on in advance by rail, to await one's arrival at Uleåborg.

Our party consisted of three ladies and four men, including myself, not counting the crew, which numbered two oarsmen and the steersman, upon whom all our lives depended. We were placed one after the other, facing the bow.

An inspector sees that all is in good trim before each boat leaves, and after he had made sure we were not overloaded, and had given his consent for our start, one of the crew let go the painter.

The thrill of an unknown experience was felt by us all. The most exciting motor race pales before this fight with the waters. Before I had time to realize that we had left the landing-stage of Waala, the boat commenced to gather speed—quicker and quicker—until we were fairly on the wing.

The boat was swayed by the contesting currents of the stream. For a second we seemed gripped by the strength of the foaming waves that leapt around like a sea of flames. Then again we felt ourselves released, and, as if pursued by those millions of speeding waves, we flew onwards and downwards.

The low-lying shores were scarcely heeded; now green fields flashed past, now banks clad with slender birch trees, patches of corn divided by brooks hurrying towards the stream, glints of wild flowers, groups of cattle standing beneath the shadow of the forest.

Picture succeeds picture, but the eye can only conjecture them, like thoughts born to die in the awakening of the next.

Fear one does not feel. The excitement of the moment obliterates all other sensations. Even when we had glided once more into smooth water, after the first cataract was passed, the tension of that wonderful passage remained still with us. The long stretches of the motionless river seemed as unreal as the mighty cataract in our wake.

This first cataract is called Niskakoski, and is more than nine miles long. The time taken to descend was fifteen minutes.

The river widened as the voice of Niskakoski receded, and a solemn stillness pervaded the atmosphere. The banks of the river became loftier, and the hills of green reddened with the first blush of the heather, which mirrored itself in the depths of the water.

Now and again we passed an exquisite valley. In one of those glades, standing close to the brink of the river, I saw a solitary log-built cottage. The walls were grey with the breath of passing years; but that homestead had a solemn dignity about it.

A drenching shower broke now over our heads. The rain was tropical in its intensity; the heavy drops fell on the surface of the motionless water like hail, and in a few minutes we were all drenched to the skin. Fortunately, we were not far from Merilä, the halfway station, where a hut for the use of travellers has been erected by the Tourist Club, and where, in case of unforeseen circumstances, one can stop the night.

However, our steersman said it would not be necessary for us to do so, and after half an hour's wait, we proceeded on our journey. By the time we reached Merilä the rain was not so violent, but the prospect of shelter and a dry-up was none the less to be desired.

The hut proved indeed to be a refuge for those in distress. The ladies of our party were soaked, but bore up heroically under the trying circumstances. The hut was in charge of an old peasant woman, who provided us with hot coffee and bread, which, together with a flask of something stronger, cheered our party up immensely. The good news that the storm had passed made us keen to continue our descent, and we lost no time in settling ourselves down again in the boat, *en route* for the next cataract.

The air after the rain was deliciously fragrant, and the departing storm-clouds had ranged themselves across the sky like a great gate of grey marble, through which one could dimly discern the hidden fire of the sun.

In the distance we could hear the murmur of the mighty Pyhakoski (the Holy Stream). Of all the cataracts of the Uleå River, Pyhakoski is the longest and the most dangerous to descend. The face of our pilot became sterner as he gave the order to ship the oars, and we felt our frail boat quiver as the current alone drew us on apace.

The pilot bent slightly forward as if listening; the voice of his stream was calling. For an instant he looked upwards as a swallow dipped in his sight—the wings of the bird were like silver. Just at that

point those gates of grey marble rolled suddenly asunder, and a bewildering brightness flooded our path. His stern look relaxed, and a triumphant light shone in his keen eyes, as with master craft he steered his boat down the pathway the sun had made for us.

With increased velocity the current carried us down towards the cataract. A faint shade of rose flushed the surface of the water, as yet unbroken. Behind the trees a band of deepest purple divided the forest from the sky. Gradually the shores of the river sank lower and lower, and a strange solemnity crept over the scene.

Now the foam-tipped waves of Pyhakoski caught us, and with incredible speed the banks, the trees, the flowers flashed past. A fleeting glimpse of a bare-footed child, or the tinkle of a cow-bell, were the only things to remind us of the world behind.

About halfway down the immense cataract the waters seem to weary of their own vigour, and only a dull cry comes from its breast, like the echo of a sob when a woman's tears are done.

Suddenly the river bends sharply to the right, and the giant waves rise from its depths ready to dash to pieces the frail thing that has dared to challenge their stronghold. Now the stern face of the pilot grows grim. He knows that one flicker of indecision, and his little craft would be dashed to pieces by those waiting giants. They have collected together in a narrow pass, beneath a sheer precipice of naked granite, and, in their fury, lash each other with cruel thongs of foam that curl and creep, now low, now erect, in one mass of seething, boiling



PYHÄKOSKI, THE HOLY STREAM

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waters that seem as if they could drag the strongest thing into their black depths.

That rock is called Pälli, and to escape the awful whirlpool below it the boat has to leap and turn almost at a right angle round the corner of the river to smoother waters.

That instant is the supreme moment of the whole descent. The tension of it is terrible. Once beyond that rock, we could breathe again. The river lost the solemnity it had had, and we fairly skimmed along over the millions of snow-white waves that danced beneath us. There is no waterway in the world that can equal the reach of the Uleå River that flows just beyond the grasp of the whirlpool below Pälli.

Silver-stemmed birch trees crowded the steep banks as they watched us fly past their shores. Slender fern-fronds grew at their feet, and little brooks rippled merrily over them.

Countless varieties of moss could be seen everywhere, from the deepest emerald green to the faintest silver grey of the lichen which clung to the cliffs of red granite. Here and there a carpet of pink heather almost touched the edge of the water.

If it was nearer the beaten track of the world, no man or woman would be satisfied until they had sped down the snow-tipped waves of Pyhakoski. But Cook's agent has not as yet set his mark upon it; and the thousand voices of the mighty cataract sing only to the spirits of the ancient gods that linger by those shores.

As we neared Muhos, our resting-place until the morrow, evening had sped across the skies, and night stood already in waiting to draw a veil over the

rushing waters of the Holy Stream that we now had left behind. The surface of the beautiful little lake upon which the village of Muhos stands looked like polished black marble in that luminous twilight of the Far North.

The sun had set an hour since, but the after-glow still rested upon the silent forest, and encircled the horizon with a band of fire. Against that flaming background the topmost crowns of the trees became transformed into the spires of a ghostlike cathedral, rising above a vast city.

The silence of Nature swept around us, and the rustle of a leaf could have been heard. Only the steady rhythm of the oars broke the stillness, as they dipped in and out of the water. Physical fatigue had lulled our voices, and it was hard to realize, as we landed at Muhos, that eight hours had slipped past since we had stepped into the boat at Waala.

Before our little company separated, we all shook hands with our brave pilot. If ever a man earned a good night's rest, he did.

CHAPTER XIV

The reaction of excitement—Early morning of departure—Flourishing villages—Salmon traps—Arrival at Uleåborg—A dull town—A bright citizeness—The timber market—New quarters—Sunday decorum—Colour characteristics of the Finns—The scarlet woman—A contented town—A typical home—The old castle—The great storm—Merikoski cataract—The last descent—Largest tar store in the world—Uleåborg seen from the bridge—Some famous men—Zachris Topelius—An old letter—Silver ornaments—A true incident—An evil eye—Overpowering light of the North—An unpremeditated departure.

THE excitement of the day before made the following morning seem as flat as ditch water. The only consolation was that the distance between Muhos and Uleåborg was agreeably short, and that before midday one could have the satisfaction of a real tub and forget the very scanty supply of hot water that the landlady of the inn at Muhos considered sufficient for one's personal use.

The steamer for Uleåborg left at six a.m. Just before our departure, an ordinary tar-boat laden with peasants arrived from Merilä. The boat had barely an inch to spare above the water-level, and it seemed a miracle that it had successfully passed the dreaded corner of Pälli. One woman carried a fat Finnish baby, who dimpled with pleasure at everything and everybody, and who had evidently taken that

early rush through the dancing waves of Pyhakoski as a pleasant morning sunning. The poor young mother looked weary and worn, as if the vitality of her infant had robbed her of hers.

The early morning had the charm of rarity for me—not being an early bird—and many things were revealed that would have been hidden after sunrise.

To begin with, I had not seen such a populated district since I left Sordavala. Quite important farms, and even villages, succeeded each other in reckless profusion. Women were washing their clothes in the river, and one pretty girl had suspended her work, and was bending over the edge of the clear water, looking at herself in that crystal-clear mirror.

Fishermen were spreading out their great salmon-nets to dry. Cows were wending their way solemnly towards their happy hunting-grounds in the forest. Our steamer kept on stopping at the numerous landing-bridges with aggravating reiteration, taking from each a goodly supply of heavy milking cans and piled-up baskets of good things for the Uleåborg market—butter, eggs, poultry, and fruit in endless profusion. At least, we had the comforting conviction that we should not starve there.

As we passed further down the river, numerous salmon-traps were frequently to be seen. The trap consists of upright wooden stakes placed in a straight line across the river like a fence, with only a small water-gate allowing just room for the steamer to pass. The stakes are covered with taut nets, in which the salmon are caught as they make

their way up the river from the sea. The largest salmon incubating house in Finland is built about halfway between Muhos and Uleåborg. The salmon roe is hatched out in graduated heated tanks, and has proved a most successful industry. This year over seventy thousand salmon have been raised and sent out to sea. But it is said only half the number actually survive.

The first view of Uleåborg is somewhat disappointing. The town itself is built on the banks of a fine cataract, which obliges steamers to moor two miles further up the river, the nearest landing-stage for the town. It is advisable to telephone from Muhos, to have a cab to meet the steamer, as otherwise there is the chance of a long wait before a droschka can be got.

The drive to the town is down an apparently endless road, bordered with poplars, that reminded me of one of those uninteresting high-roads one knows so well in Brittany or Normandy. The outskirts of the town have largely increased during the last few years, and Uleåborg gives to the stranger an imposing idea of size. But nothing can prevent it from being hopelessly ugly. The streets stretch out to a length that is simply maddening to any one searching for a particular house. Every house, moreover, is an exact counterpart of its neighbour. The result is a dull uniformity, that must surely react on the inhabitants. But one must not go by appearances. The very brightest little Finnish lady I have ever been acquainted with makes Uleåborg her home. She is the wife of one of the officers of the recently

disbanded Finnish regiments, and her only sorrow appeared to be that her stalwart husband could no longer wear the uniform of a soldier.

There is, however, one exception to the usual long wooden buildings of the town, and that is the fine four-storied hotel built of granite, which, needless to say, owns the name of Societetshuset. The entrance suggests a museum rather than a hotel, and the architect who designed it certainly did not husband his space! The hotel happened to be crowded during my visit, as every available room in Uleåborg was occupied by the enormous influx of wood merchants from all parts of Finland, who had come for the annual timber sale that was to be held the next week.

I had not thought of reserving a room, never dreaming that there would be any difficulty of obtaining one in Uleåborg, which is as a rule practically deserted during the summer. I felt rather disgusted at being turned away from the Societetshuset, and having to search for quarters elsewhere.

I was lucky in finding a most comfortable little hotel opposite the station, only opened that week, called Hotel Piipari. The landlady was very obliging, and tried her best to make her guests forget that her hotel was still in the hands of the workmen, not more than half of the rooms being finished. The one I occupied was only partly finished, but it was a new experience to occupy a room that was being continually added to. I never left that room without finding on my return something new to greet me. A rug, a sofa, an electric lamp, a writing-table, were

some of the added bits that I remember. The room was small, and at last I had to refuse gently but firmly to take anything further in.

The kitchens were not ready, much to the vexation of the good-tempered landlady, but she brought me in the evening and morning most excellent coffee, and a tremendous assortment of fancy bread, for which the Uleåborg confectioners are famous.

The restaurant of the Societetshuset was first-class, even better than the one at Helsingfors, so no one need fear starvation.

The day I arrived at Uleåborg was a Sunday, and instead of the usual gaiety of a continental town on that day, a certain solemnity prevailed in the deserted streets.

Numbers of peasant women were returning from church, the greater number in black, and all wearing black silk coverings on their heads.

To go to church in colours is considered the height of indecorum in Finland. Colour plays a considerable part upon the character of a Finn. Black has been, and doubtless will always be, a sign of full dress in all classes, from peasant women to the governor's wife. White is associated with mourning, as on the death of a member of a family the walls and furniture of the death-chamber, as well as the living-rooms where the guests assemble before the funeral, are hung with white sheets. Red is now the recognized hue of the women Socialists. This is carried to such an extent, that the female Socialist members of the new Diet wear bright scarlet gowns when sitting in the house.

The atmosphere of Uleåborg does not appear

to be conducive to Socialism, and I can think of nothing more at variance with the sedate calm of the old town than the hoisting of that banner of discontent.

I remember one home which belonged to a dear old maiden lady that had a peculiar charm about it. The furniture was all genuinely antique, and filled me with envy. The chairs were ranged round the walls in exactly the same positions as when they were bought two hundred years ago, and on the walls there hung charming eighteenth-century pastels in gilt oval frames of the same period. The only modern bits were the carefully tended evergreen plants which stood in symmetrical rows by the windows. This was only one of a hundred homes equally old-fashioned that could be found in those long, wide streets of Uleåborg.

The town is the largest and richest in the North of Finland, and already as far back as 1400, it had a considerable trade in salmon and tar. It also possessed, like most of the more important centres in Finland, a strongly fortified castle, built, like the one at Kajana, on a rock in the midst of a raging torrent.

The castle was reconstructed in 1590 by Count Pehr Bagge, who, from old historical records, is said to have found there the ruins of a former castle of great antiquity, which some historians think was originally erected by the first Christians to ward off the attacks of the heathen, who for many centuries after the introduction of Christianity still kept their strongholds in the wildernesses of Österbotten.

The castle that rose on the ruins of the old one

became more the centre of the Government than a fortress, and the different governors who occupied it held autocratic rule over the surrounding districts. Many personages of note have stayed there, amongst them the soldier-king, Gustaf Adolf II. of Sweden, who visited Uleåborg in 1614. No castle in Finland has more peaceful records. It was never besieged, and would have been to this day intact if it had not been for an untoward accident which happened in 1793.

On a sultry day in August a terrific thunderstorm broke over the town, exceeding in violence any that had ever taken place before. The very heavens appeared to be in flames, and a great darkness increased the fear of the inhabitants, which soon developed into a veritable panic as a terrific noise rent the air. The whole earth seemed rent asunder. A rain of heavy stones crushed through the roofs of the houses. Church doors flew open, and their bells commenced to ring, while every pane of glass in the town was shattered. The people rushed recklessly into the streets thinking the end of the world had come. When the darkness had somewhat lifted, it became known that the lightning had struck an immense store of gunpowder hidden in the vaults of the castle, which had completely exploded, levelling the castle to the ground.

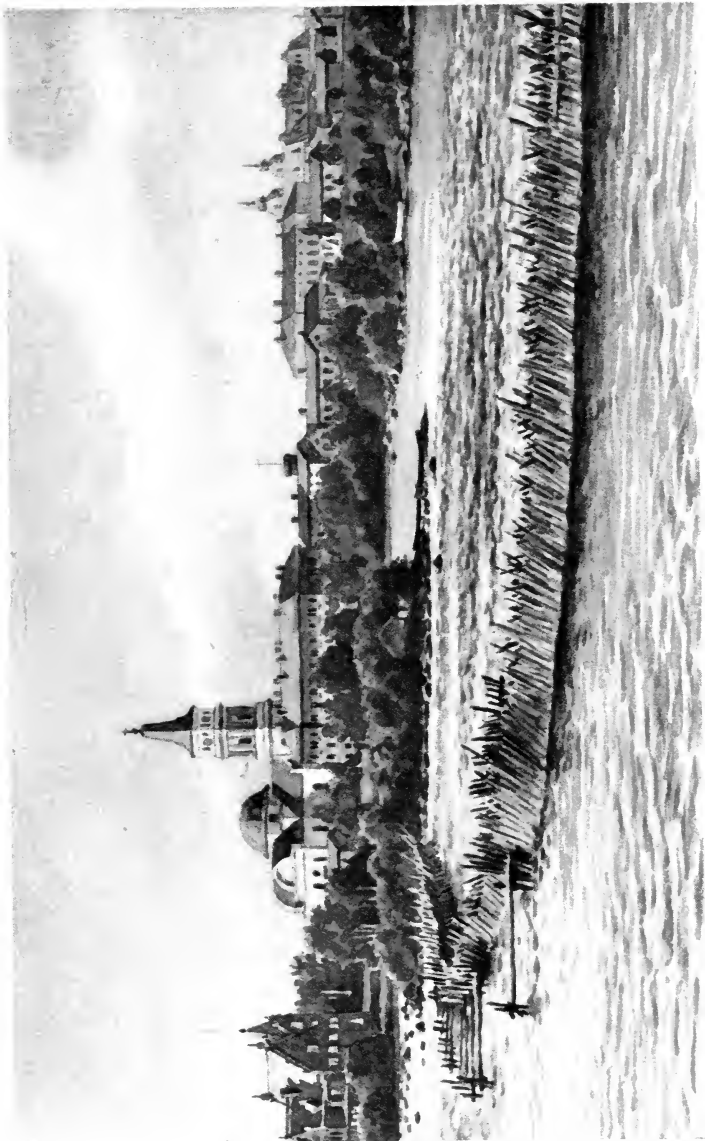
The incident is to be doubly regretted, as we have lost an interesting relic from mediæval times, and Uleåborg its principal ornament, of which only a few shattered ruins remained. The site upon which it stood, a rock in the centre of the river, has been connected with the town by a long suspension

bridge of iron. From there a splendid view of the foaming waters of the Merikoski Rapid is obtained.

Merikoski is the last cataract of the Uleå River, and rushes down at this point with majestic force towards the castle island and bridge. It is considered too dangerous for tourists to descend, and the Tourists' Club have vetoed it as far as their boats are concerned; but if one has nerve enough to essay the descent, it can be easily done by driving from Uleåborg to Nokkala, a distance of two miles from the town. From there, one can go down the cataract in one of the numerous tar-boats that are obliged to undertake the perilous journey to reach Toppila, three miles further down, where the tar is unloaded.

In any case an excursion to Toppila ought not to be omitted. It is the largest base for collecting tar, excepting Archangel, that exists in the world, and annually about one hundred thousand barrels of tar are landed there, all of which come successfully down the cataracts of the Uleå River.

Uleåborg as seen from that bridge loses its ugliness. Within sight of those leaping waves and richly wooded shores, the flat wooden buildings of the town are forgotten. One remembers then that this is the capital of the vast province of Österbotten, which has given to Finland some of her most famous men of letters. Amongst them are Franz Michael Franzen, Johan Ludvig Runeberg, Henrik Porthan, Johan Vilhelm Snellman, Elias Lönnrot, and Zachris Topelius—all men of genius, now called away, but who during their lifetime gave an enormous impetus to the culture and learning of their fatherland.



ULEÅBORG

10. VIKO
MAYNIAO

Of those dead masters I only knew one personally, and that was Zachris Topelius, the most popular poet Finland has ever known. He was called "the children's friend," and some of his most charming verses and stories were written for children. That he stood godfather at my baptism in Helsingfors will always be one of my proudest recollections.

He was a poet born, not made. Every line he wrote added one flower to that garden of dreams that he left behind him. That all children adored him was not to be wondered at. He had something of childhood's innocence himself, even in his old age. It might truly be his epitaph, "He trusted all men, and all men trusted him."

His love for Nature almost exceeded his love for children, and Nature in return whispered to him the secrets born in the heart of the stream and the wild flowers. The misgivings and bitterness so apparent in the writings of the modern Scandinavian school were unknown to him. His was a grand simplicity and an open-hearted charity that thinketh evil of no man.

A few years ago I came across an old letter that he had written to a little Finnish boy who at the time was residing in England for his education. In it he said, "You are in a great and rich country, but never forget that you are only an exile! If Queen Victoria herself should write and offer you a post in her kingdom, remember that you must answer, 'I cannot, because I have a cottage waiting for me when I am grown up. It has a roof higher than the loftiest hall in Windsor Castle. That roof is the blue sky of my own land.'"

This love of his country was one of the strong points of his character. Besides his works in poetry and prose, he was also a well-known dramatist.

The shop windows of Uleåborg are exceedingly quaint, perched high up in the one-storied wooden buildings, as if they were too modest to draw undue attention to their existence. In one I noticed an old silver sixteenth-century tankard, and some very good specimens of antique silver chains. Unfortunately the owner must have been a strict Sabbatarian; with all my endeavours I could not enter that tantalizing shop, so that silver tankard still remains for some lucky collector to acquire.

Old silver is becoming each year rarer to find. Not more than ten years ago it was comparatively easily got hold of. I remember an incident that took place only a few years since in one of the best-known provincial towns of Finland. I was in a silversmith's shop, celebrated for the excellence of its wares, when a lady entered and offered for sale a gem of the old silversmith's art in the form of an antique silver cake-basket, exquisitely carved with an encircling wreath of vine leaves and their fruit. The whole piece was so fragile and light that it quivered as the owner of the shop placed it in the scales. The silversmith carefully looked up the current value of silver, and handed the lady the amount of coin due for the exchange, which she received with evident pleasure.

I happened to turn away for a moment and heard the shop door close simultaneously with a jingling sound. In that instant the burly silversmith had crushed the fragile basket between his hands into an

unrecognizable ball, which he had just thrown on to a heap of broken bits of silver behind the counter. My consternation was so evident that the master-smith eyed me with distinct disapproval. "That is for the melting-pot," he said in a lordly manner. "I flatter myself that my work is better than that old rubbish." I wonder if that silversmith does not to-day regret some of "the old rubbish" which he has so ruthlessly destroyed.

From the shops I wended my way across the square towards the governor's residence, where I left my cards, with some regret that the family were absent. The present governor used formerly to command one of the Finnish regiments in Åbo, where I had had the pleasure of making his acquaintance.

In crossing the square I saw an old peasant man of a type that has almost vanished. He was wearing a long loose coat of faded green cloth, decorated with silver buttons, knee breeches, and shoes made from bark. In his hand he carried a great wooden stave. His long flowing white locks gave him a curious dignity that his odd garments did not lessen. He met my eyes and returned my gaze angrily. I wished I had not received that vindictive look, and vague reminiscences of tales I had heard of the power of the magicians of Österbotten flitted through my mind. The clear light of that beautiful summer evening brought into sharp relief the strange figure of that old man as he walked slowly away across the empty square.

It was difficult to imagine, in the midst of the brilliant light of Uleåborg, the darkness of the winters

in those latitudes. The very brilliance of those brief summers have something akin to melancholy to them. Everything rushes through them as though conscious that the days of their freedom are numbered. Vegetation bursts forth in a night; corn which in the South of Finland takes one hundred and twelve to one hundred and sixteen days to ripen, from seed time to harvest, will, in this northern district, be fit to cut in the surprisingly short period of eighty-two days.

This extraordinary rapidity of growth is only due to the abundance of light, which also gives to the vegetation a vitality and rich verdure unknown in the South of Finland.

The next day I left for Torneå. True, I missed what no conscientious traveller would ever omit to do, and that was seeing the unloading of the celebrated salmon-traps of Uleåborg which daily during the fishing season (June, July, and August) successfully catch hundreds of salmon, thence exported direct by train to Helsingfors and St. Petersburg.

But I have never pretended to be a conscientious traveller, so I did not sink thereby in my own esteem.

CHAPTER XV

A ticket to the Polar Circle—The most northerly town in Finland—The midnight sun—The youngest railway—Toy stations—A two-storied bridge—Curiosity of the inhabitants—Gardening under difficulties—Kemi—A Northern beauty—Arrival at Torneå—Fascination of the town—A comfortable hotel—Ancient rights—A modern rival—Swedish frontier—The old bridge—Soldiers' graves—A gilded church—Many treasures—The fear of fire—Quaint architecture—Miniature public garden—Haymakers—Orderly dwellings—A reminder of Kent—A tempting shop—Departure from Torneå—A dreaded neighbour—The coming of winter—Last impression.

“ONE second, single, to Torneå,” I said quite hesitatingly, as I peered through the wire entanglements fixed up in front of the little ticket office at Uleåborg. Torneå is the most northerly town in Finland, and is situated just on the border of the Polar Circle. In my wildest dreams I had never thought of going to the Polar Circle in a comfortable railway-carriage. It somehow made the Pole appear too familiar.

First and second-class carriages on the Finnish railways are exactly the same. If you feel unsociable enough to travel quite alone, then buy a first-class ticket, and you will have your carriage entirely to yourself. When the guard comes along and looks at your ticket, and sees it is first, he pastes a little

notice on the window with "Första klass" printed thereon, which isolates you, and lets the world know that you are "something special."

Hitherto Torneå has only been associated with tourists, as being the most convenient centre for reaching the famous mountain of Avasaksa, from the summit of which the world-renowned spectacle of the midnight sun is seen in all its magnificence on Midsummer Eve.

Since times immemorial the little town of Torneå has awakened to feverish excitement at that one epoch of the year, in its strenuous endeavours to house the stream of tourists who have journeyed from far and near, to come and pay homage to the midnight sun.

In former days, a journey to Torneå and Avasaksa was a veritable pilgrimage, and when I hear of the hardships and fatigue of such an undertaking, I realize what an easy task we have nowadays to reach the midnight sun!

Avasaksa has not only been the goal of tourists, but also the headquarters for astronomical observations. As far back as 1736, a French astronomer erected a humble hut upon its summit, and lived there during the summer. In 1839 a French North Pole expedition made it their base. Many great names are inscribed on Avasaksa's granite cliffs of those who have come to see the sleepless sun.

Sometimes a clouded sky will mar the spectacle. A king, Charles XI. of Sweden, who made a pilgrimage to Avasaksa, was ill rewarded for his trouble, because nature sulked and heavy mists blurred the landscape. But if the heavens are clear one can never forget the scene. The longest journey is

rewarded by the magnificence of the sight. The sun sinks slowly and majestically, like a great ball of blood-red fire on the brink of the horizon. Nature becomes as if paralyzed at this supreme moment. Then gradually the fire lessens its intensity, and a glow of rose drenches the hills, the valleys, and the waters as the sun gloriously rises again in the heavens. Proudly and jubilantly waves of light go forth to meet the new-born day, and night is conquered.

The railway line to Torneå is the youngest railway in Finland. The little stations are as new and spotless as a child's toy station that has just been unpacked from its box. In comparison with their dainty freshness the railway station of Uleåborg was quite antiquated and cumbrous. One of those toy stations could easily be placed in its waiting-room.

Unfortunately the train itself was dusty, and possessed a monster of ugliness for an engine. The size of a Finnish engine is quite double that of an ordinary English one, the reason being the large space required for fuel, which in Finland consists only of wood. I had seen many ugly specimens during my journey, but never anything that approached the engine that was to pull me up to the Polar Circle. Perhaps it required extra strength, as it had already travelled direct from Helsingfors before I boarded it at Uleåborg.

The dust had penetrated into the interior of the train, and the carriages felt uncomfortably warm, although the seats were covered with the usual white linen coverings, which are such a delightful adjunct to one's comfort and cleanliness when travelling in Finland during the summer. I often think of those

cleanly, white carriages when endeavouring to select the least dirty compartment on an ordinary South Eastern and Chatham train.

The immediate neighbourhood of Uleåborg was astonishingly well cultivated, considering the northern latitude of the district. Small farms and red-painted cottages appeared and reappeared at such frequent intervals that I began seriously to think that they were placed there only for show. But all too soon they became less regular, and at length the eye wearied in looking for them. Each succeeding mile gained in wildness and strength, which seemed to culminate as the train passed over the splendid iron suspension bridge across the lake of Kiiminki.

This colossal work cost the Finnish State over a million marks. The bridge is built with two levels, the lower one for ordinary traffic, and the upper one for the train. As we crossed over it I could see, mirrored in the water below, the outline of some lumbering country carts, slowly wending their way beneath us. The rumble of the heavy train appeared to be of no account to the Finnish horses, and they did not accelerate their speed by one jot.

The indifference of the little horses was not shared by the people, and the farther north we got the more evident became their curiosity. At each of the toy stations that we passed, probably the whole population had turned out to gaze with solemn wonder at us.

As if to combat the increasing monotony of Nature's hues, the people vied with each other in the gaudiness of their attire. At one of our halting-places I made a rough note of a young girl's finery.

She was an uncommonly plain girl, so I did not waste moments unnecessarily in gazing at her face. I began feet upwards. The first item was easy: naked feet and ankles burnt almost black with exposure to the sun. A short skirt, with exasperating stripes of a horrid shade of pink and blue. A scarlet bodice, and a bright mauve kerchief on her head. This combination of colours was enough to set any man's teeth on edge. The only bit that did not strike a discord were her naturally browned feet.

That our tastes can differ was brought clearly before me, because the village gallants who grouped themselves at the opposite end of the miniature platform eyed that gaudy damsel with very open admiration.

At the next station I saw the first attempt at a real garden that I had seen on the new line. It was a most pathetic picture. Three little patches of ragged grass carefully hedged in with wire, and divided by scrupulously tended paths, about four yards in length. In the centre of one patch a struggling rose bush essayed to look as if it did not grow out of a pot hidden in the soil, and actually bore one bud that swayed disconsolately in the breeze. The station-master stood on the platform and gravely saluted the passing train. Poor fellow! I wondered if he would ever make anything grow in that forlorn garden? To be a keen horticulturist and live near the Polar Circle must be a great trial.

The train plunged after that into the heart of a great forest. After a few hours we suddenly emerged from the forest to enter a green valley open to the

sun, where the waters of a gently descending brook went singing towards an unseen sea.

Up the valley cows were wending their way towards an old, red-painted farmhouse that shone like a fire through the dark fir trees that surrounded it.

The whole setting of that picture was as delightful as it was unexpected.

This pleasant picture was in my memory when I fell asleep. When I opened my eyes again, it was to find the polite guard informing me in a slightly raised voice that we would reach Kemi station in ten minutes, where, if I so desired it, I could partake of refreshments.

The immediate approach to the town is notified by the stupendous railway bridge that crosses the Gulf of Kemi. The length of this bridge, which is connected by three small islands, is one mile. Its construction was extremely difficult, owing to the depth of the water and the strong current. The further end had to be built in one stretch of five hundred and twenty feet without intermediary supports. The cost of the bridge exceeded one and a half million marks.

The little town of Kemi, situated on a bay of the Gulf of Botnia, is one of the oldest in Finland. As far back as 1329 it was known as the centre of a flourishing trade in fish, seals, and furs. It possesses an old stone church, built in 1517, with curious frescoes and several relics from the Catholic period. In the church is also kept the preserved body of a celebrated priest who died here in 1629.

The old church no longer watches alone over the little town that it has guarded for so many years. Four

years ago an imposing modern temple was erected. Old Kemi is fast disappearing. The picturesque sailing-boats that used formerly to come silently up the harbour, with the breezes of the salt sea still in their outspread sails, are superseded by noisy steamers. The gaily painted peasant carts, filled with the spoils of the forest, that once clattered over the stone streets of Kemi, are seen no more, and in their place the railway thunders through the town.

The advent of the train from Helsingfors is, apparently, the great event of the day. The platform was crowded with spectators as we steamed slowly into the station. The boys and girls of Kemi were particularly good-looking, fair-haired and blue-eyed.

I noticed one lad about nineteen years of age who possessed more than his share of good looks. He wore his wide black felt hat well tilted to one side of his head. This gallant of Kemi had further increased his attractiveness by wearing an enormous button-hole of bluebells: the real bluebells of Scotland, that seem to link the two countries together.

On leaving Kemi a beautiful view of the harbour and bay is seen, by far the most wide-stretched view since we left Uleåborg.

A young Finnish university student, who had disappeared and reappeared at different places all through my journey, again made his appearance on the train at Kemi. He was at last introduced to me by a mutual acquaintance who was going to Torneå. The young student proved to be an emissary of the Tourists' Society of Finland, who

once a year send a representative to inspect the various hotels and inns under their supervision. Their headquarters are in Helsingfors, and they are always most happy to give any information as to routes, etc., to intending travellers.

The student had been satisfied with his tour, which, after two months of constant travelling, was now nearing completion.

The next stopping-place was his home, and his face literally beamed with pleasure at the thought of returning again to his own.

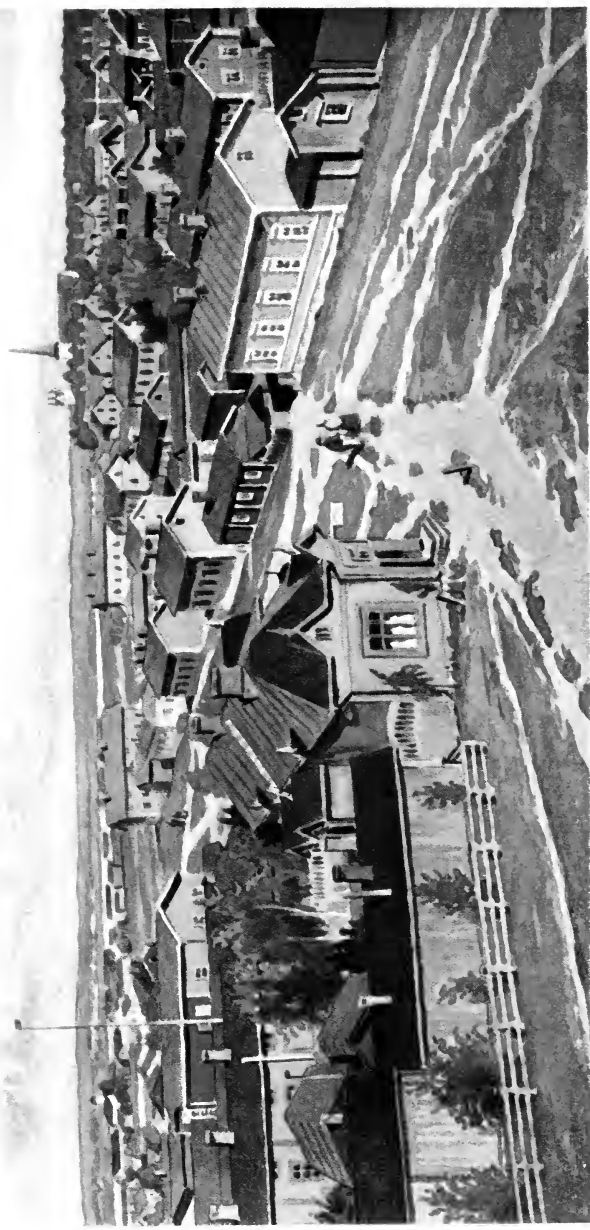
He showed me some interesting photographs from his trip inland, which had been much more off the beaten track than the route I had followed.

He was met at his station by a charmingly pretty young lady, with a dazzling complexion, glorious eyes, and hair of an indescribable shade of copper. It was quite startling to come across such a real beauty in such a desolate district. No wonder the young man had looked pleased.

After one or two short halts at the intermediary stations we came in sight of Finland's most northerly town, and the projected railway to the North Pole came to an abrupt conclusion—for the present. But one never knows what the future has in store.

Ten years ago, I should have thought the difficulties of constructing a railway between Uleåborg and Torneå were insurmountable. I did not know the obstinacy of the Finns.

From the first moment I set my foot in Torneå I became completely enamoured with the place. A magnetic spell seemed cast over me, and I vow during my whole journey in Finland I was never



TORNEÁ

so reluctant to quit any place as that little grass-carpeted town hidden on the borders of the eternal snows.

Torneå is still asleep in the arms of past centuries. Everything was asleep there. The very river gliding past it was slumbering. The clouds were immovable, and the sky was one placid exquisite blue that never altered. Torneå is the cradle of Nature. The curtains of that cradle were summer, sunshine, and light—glorious folds of light.

Light that we who live in lower latitudes cannot realize. The light of Torneå made any other light that I had seen a misty grey in comparison with its transcendent clearness. It allowed human eyes to see far away into a horizon that had no end, and which at the same time seemed so close that the farthest cloud was visible.

The air that uplifted those folds of light was almost as wonderful. It is laden with the crystal purity of the eternal snows, as it comes straight across the untrodden fells like an unseen river of freshness, as cool and clear as an icicle that melts in the sun.

I hardly remember now what my first impression of Torneå was. It was possibly surprise that no visible sign of human habitation existed. The railway line is sharply cut off before the town is sighted, and one is practically stranded by the wayside. There is just sufficient pretence at a platform to make a traveller understand that the abrupt halt is not an accident, but that the train has come to a standstill for the simple reason that it cannot proceed further.

Also a large board with six freshly painted letters which spelt T O R N E Å was placed prominently in the face of all who cared to read. It would have been easy to realize without the help of that board that we had come to the end of our journey, by the fact that the first to hurry away from the train were the people who had charge of it.

The guard alighted first, and he was followed by the engine driver. The passengers soon followed their example, and we all proceeded in the wake of the guard, who still, apparently, had us in his care. The great black engine looked like a forsaken derelict against the cloudless blue of the sky. There was not the sign of a horse or conveyance in view, only a straight road that led down a distance of two hundred yards, or more, to the brink of a wide river that encircled a sweep of green fields in front of us.

In the centre of those fields I first saw my dream town.

By the edge of the water our leader halted. I stared at the intervening water, and wondered if we were intended to swim across it. The idea was most tempting if it had not been for the thought that a bedraggled appearance on the other side would be misjudged, as in Finland people who have fallen into the water are always assumed to have partaken too well!

The other extreme, of appearing in the costume immortalized by Hans Andersen, in his fairy tale called "The Emperor's New Clothes," might be considered indecorous.

In the midst of my reflections a queer-shaped thing on the opposite shore, that looked like a part

of a whale, began slowly to move across the water towards our side. The whale turned out to be a very antiquated ferry.

In the mean time a porter had emerged from somewhere, and in a highly official manner informed me that he would bring my luggage across later. That porter possessed an aggressively new cap, with the inscription "Societetshuset" printed in gold letters on it. As far as I can remember, that cap was the only thing that struck a note of discord in Torneå.

The hotel was charming, a long, low one-storied wooden house, with a field of green grass right up to the front door. Inside, it was quite luxuriously furnished, with a large suite of public rooms, including a billiard-room. It had only been opened that summer, so everything was as fresh as a new pin.

Torneå will doubtless some day be one of the most popular health resorts in Europe. Any ills that the flesh is heir to must be dispersed in that life-giving atmosphere.

"Some day" I hope will be far distant. I should like always to think of that town as I saw it then in its calm serenity, with the swallows as its only visitors from foreign parts.

Torneå has evaded the notice of our big world for many centuries. It was founded as far back as 1324, and the church has been mentioned as having existed in 1345, when the Archbishop from Upsala crossed the Swedish frontier and baptized the heathens from the surrounding districts, in the old stone font which is still used.

In the same year the first Christian burial-place

of these parts was opened by Bishop Hemming, one of the greatest of the Finnish Roman Catholic prelates, and who, two centuries after his death, was canonized by the Church of Rome.

For many centuries Torneå enjoyed comparative affluence as the only centre for trade in these northern regions. Laplanders from the distant fells, Russians from the east, Swedes and Norwegians from the west, all wended their way during the short summers to barter their goods at Torneå.

Possibly in those days the town was more wide-awake than it is now. But it could never have been properly awake, or it would not have allowed its modern Swedish rival Haparanda to settle itself almost within its gates.

The Swedish frontier town of Haparanda was only founded in 1827, nearly five centuries later than Torneå, and is separated from it only by a narrow creek, over which a very ramshackle wooden bridge for pedestrians connects the two towns. A toll of a halfpenny is levied equally on a Finn crossing into Sweden, or a Swede crossing into Finland. At each end of the bridge there is a miniature custom house.

The bridge is not only remarkable for being in such a tottering condition, but also for being the personal property of an old maiden lady who is very decided about her rights. After her death, I was told, the old bridge will be pulled down and not replaced.

So far, the two countries are the best of friends, but friends have been known to fall out, and in such a case the connecting link would not be desirable!

Either side can, for the present, rest assured that the smallest invading army attempting to cross that

bridge would have to be very careful about it, or they would find themselves in the morass below; and I believe the old lady would be there to insist on every individual enemy paying the toll, which would retard the invasion.

For my first walk in Torneå, I went and looked at this disputed bridge, and then wended my footsteps towards the old church, which I had heard was one of the most interesting relics of the past left in Finland. The entrance gates to the high walled-in churchyard must have been designed by some one with a desire for something uncommon rather than for an artistic effect. The gates themselves are of plain wood, but they are supported by two enormous pillars of white stone, and on the top of each reposes a fat wooden melon, painted in sections of silver and black, surmounted with a large black-painted cross.

Within the walls of this ancient cemetery, one of the oldest in Finland, the trees have been allowed to grow unmolested. They are practically the only trees of any importance in Torneå. Their branches interlace and form a complete canopy of green above the forgotten graves, the greater part of which have no inscription to the persons sleeping their last long sleep beneath their heavy shadows.

Some of these nameless graves have a pathetic interest, as within them are buried the last survivors of the scattered Finnish army who, during the war of 1808-9, made their way, starving and in rags, to this far-away region, where they succumbed by scores to a malignant fever brought on by the privations and hardships they had endured during that terrible

campaign. This was the last tug-of-war between Sweden and Russia for the possession of Finland. Russia proved victorious, and has since that date held Finland.

Either the shadows of the trees, or the memory of those dead soldiers, gave a certain solemnity to my feelings, because the interior of the old church struck me as garish in contrast to the gloom outside.

The decorations are extraordinarily lavish ; gilding and painting have been dealt out with no meagre hand. The very pews have crude oil paintings of Biblical subjects on their heavy doors.

Among the curiosities of the church are the proclamations of the accession and decease of the different sovereigns who have ruled over Finland.

Amongst them is the announcement of the death of Charles XII. of Sweden, deeply bordered in black. Below it is a copy of the famous edict giving to Finland her own constitution, signed by the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia (March 27, 1809).

In the sacristy there was not much to be seen, and the vestments were disappointing considering the antiquity of the church. They had been well worn and were for the most part tattered and faded. Very different from the splendid specimens I had seen at the Borgå Cathedral.

As with all the old Finnish churches, the belfry was not attached to the church, as is the custom elsewhere, but was built separately a few yards from the entrance. This curious custom originated from the fear of fire. This notion of constructing buildings in divided sections was not only kept for churches. In Finland a great number of the old

country mansions have even to this day their kitchens in a wing that is separated from the house.

As I passed out between the guarding silver melons of the portals, the gilded decorations of the church became dulled and faded compared to the wealth of light and colour that lit up the old houses and grass-grown streets of Torneå.

In the midst of the town there was a hayfield, but a small portion of the centre had been fenced in with green-painted wooden palings.

My curiosity led me to go and see what those green palings hid from sight. I felt as if I was trespassing, and was, therefore, relieved when I saw a board that pointed out to me that within those palings was the public garden of the town.

It is the smallest public garden in the world. It contained four wooden seats and a few stunted bushes of evergreens.

I was sorry for the lovers of Torneå, they must be at a loss to obtain privacy in that garden!

But lovers of any description were not visible, and the garden was deserted. The only people to be seen were the haymakers on the other side of the palings. The men were cutting the grass with giant scythes that gleamed in the sunlight, and the women followed in their wake, spreading out the hay with their hands as it fell silently upon the shorn grass.

Everything is silent in Torneå. The inhabitants keep mostly within their gaily painted little wooden dwellings.

Now and again I saw a face peep out between the well-cared-for plants that each window contained. The houses are scrupulously clean and orderly, the

only thing that was allowed to run riot were the garlands of hops, that nearly every householder had trained over the stiff little white-painted palings that divided his domains from his neighbour.

That touch of clinging green was delightful to the eye, although the Torneå hops would never gain a silver cup in Kent.

Good manners are taught early in this quaint place, and even the smallest children gravely salute a stranger. At the cross-corners of the town the principal shop of the place is situated. A fine variety of goods can be bought there. I saw for sale a tempting outfit of a Lapland king: tunic, boots, girdle, and a high pointed cap, all fashioned to match in different furs, and bound with scarlet cloth—a highly fascinating costume that would be an undoubted success at a fancy dress ball.

Dirks and knives of all descriptions, with curious carved handles made from the horns of reindeer, could be bought, as well as silver lap spoons and ornaments which have been for centuries a speciality of Torneå. This heterogeneous collection was further added to by divers edibles and hand-woven stuffs, which lay pell-mell on the same counter.

I spent two days at Torneå, one to look about, and the other simply to breathe in that glorious air. On the morning of the third day I had to depart. This time the ferry seemed to cross the dividing water all too quickly. The encircling river was, if anything, even bluer and more restful than on the day of my arrival.

Far out in the horizon towards the north a bank of white clouds had ranged themselves side by side like

great snow mountains, and seemed to challenge those blue skies and waters. Those dimly seen mountains belonged to that white land of snows that never melt.

I left Torneå in sunshine, but I saw the hand of its dreaded neighbour, which so soon would shower millions and millions of snowflakes upon those peaceful homesteads. The light and sun, that the coming darkness of the long polar night would so mercilessly extinguish, seemed a cruel mockery. The thought of that endless winter gave me a sensation of horror. Then my eyes chanced to fall on the walls of the ancient churchyard, and I remembered those nameless graves where the brave soldiers of Finland are resting. The soft snow would cover them in a warm pall of white and hide their poverty. Winter brings its blessings also. My dream town became again cloudless and serene.

CHAPTER XVI

Climbing down again—A hasty descent—A fickle memory—Return to Uleåborg—Comparisons—Gamla Karleby—Recollections of my childhood—In the good old days—Antique furniture—Exiled in Kent—A question of etiquette—Official precedence—Ceremonious manners—A decorous town—The landing of the British—English trophies of the war—English sailors' graves—The gift of Gamla Karleby—A stormy career—Fear of the British fleet—Flight inland—A bridal party—Pretty bride—Old customs—Modern weddings—A warning—A famous battlefield—Oravais—Miraculous waters—Wasa—Korsholm Castle—Storkyro Church—Ancient frescoes—The giant's bridge—Kyro Lake—An allegory—Oblivion.

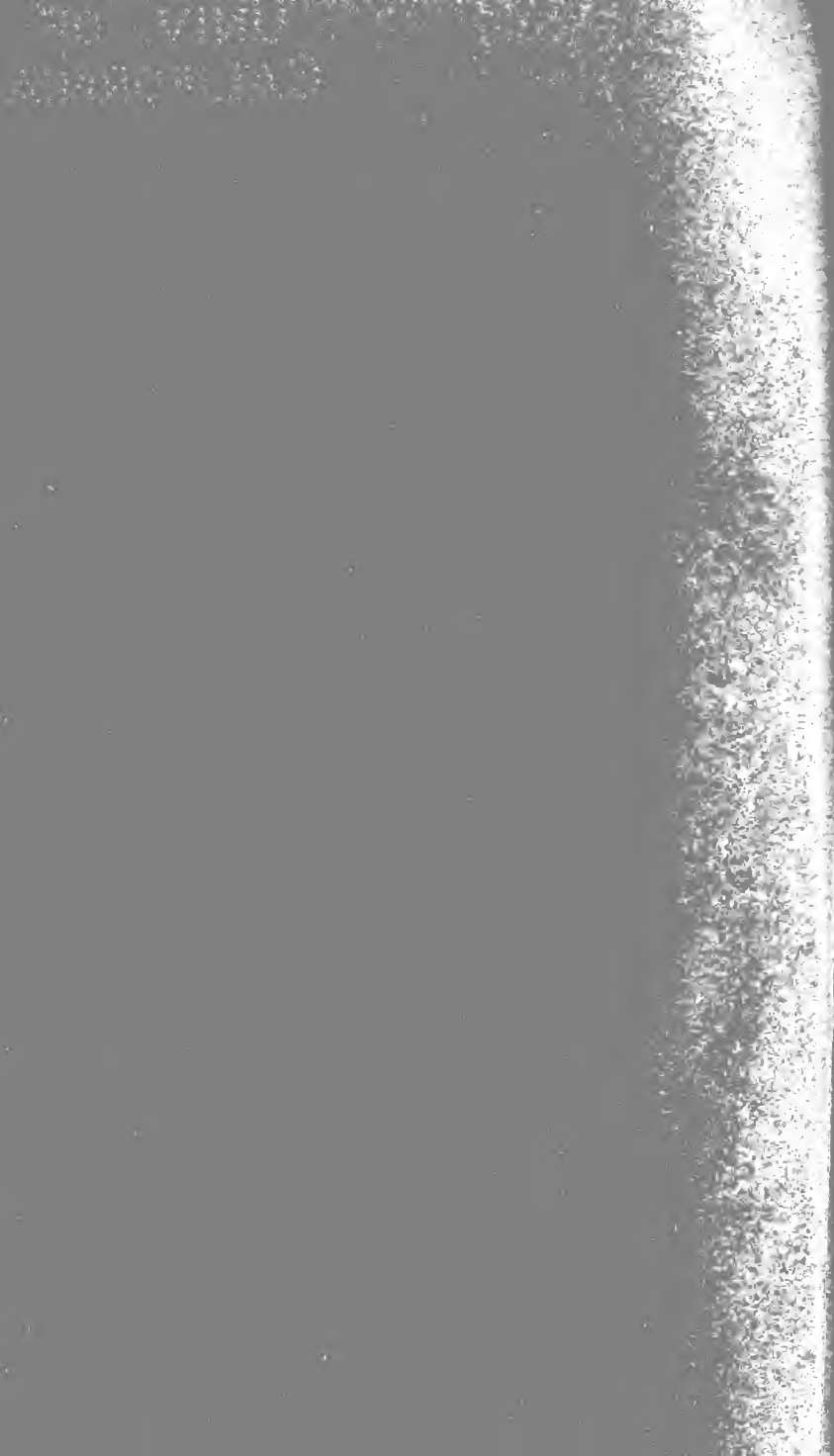
SO far my journey had been leisurely. I like taking things easily, and if I had had the time I would have crept down Finland in the same happy-go-lucky fashion in which I had climbed up it.

Torneå was the highest rung that I succeeded in getting to. Possibly the height made me dizzy, because I fell downwards again to the south with such haste, two days later, that I could hardly realize I had been so far north.

Even the slowness of a Finnish train, combined with a long night's oblivion, can do wonders in cutting off the milestones of a journey. The line going down is almost dead straight. Contrasts are agreeable. In going up I had selected the most zigzag route I could think of. I had dipped into the corners and byways



A SUMMER EVENING



of Finland, linked by many waters and shining new railways. Vast untrodden forests, leaping cataracts, and unknown lakes had come my way. The wilderness in all its strength and poverty had illuminated my progress. The people had shown me that humanity was still capable of honesty and endurance ; that the glitter and rush of the big world is not necessary to happiness. When I left Torneå I was glad that I had seen those distant homesteads and mighty streams, although it was a world I could never belong to.

I knew I had come and pried into them out of curiosity. Memory is more fickle than a woman ("some" women, I should say), and, however much we may plume ourselves on the contrary, to forget is the easiest thing in life. I wanted to remember, and foolishly did the best thing I could to forget. I went straight down the coastline by train, and did not get out till I reached Tammerfors, a town that has earned the proud title of the "Manchester of Finland."

Surely I could not have drawn a heavier screen over my memory of the grand restfulness of the North !

There were one or two breaks on the way down, not of long duration, but sufficiently protracted to get a glimpse of the principal towns that connect, or rather disconnect, the imitation Manchester from my dream town.

The first stop of any importance was at Uleåborg, the only occasion during my journey that I had passed through the same place twice. It seemed quite familiar, and the lady who presided at the station buffet bowed her welcome in a gracious manner, and even asked how I had enjoyed my visit to "little

Torneå"! There was a distinct tone of patronage in her voice.

I remember laughing at her very superior tone when, two days later, a similar question was put to me, the only difference being that it had reference to "little Uleåborg."

After leaving Uleåborg, the train diverged to the right and sped down the coastline with surprisingly few halts until we reached Gamla Karleby.

From my earliest childhood that town had aroused my curiosity. It had been the home of my grandmother, and I remember listening to the old lady with breathless attention as she used to tell me how in the good old days she used to pack herself and her numerous children in a great lumbering chariot, and post all the way from Helsingfors to Gamla Karleby. In those days trains had not been dreamt of, and the journey by road took more than a week to accomplish. Towards the autumn the roads through the forest were almost impassable, and were fraught with considerable danger, owing to the great packs of wolves that scoured them.

Oddly enough, this was the first time I had visited Gamla Karleby. My curiosity was all the keener, as I had lately inherited a fine old set of white-and-gold furniture covered with crimson damask which had come from Gamla Karleby, and which was part of my grandmother's marriage dower. The furniture was even then considered extremely antique, and had been several generations in her family. The colossal sofa, which is over twelve feet in length, has always been named by the present generation the "Gamla Karleby."

Sofas that have belonged to bygone generations are generally of the same generous proportions in Finland. The reason of this unusual length is that the sofa, even to this day, is the place of honour, and a lady entitled to the rank of taking her place on the sofa would consider herself insulted if her hostess asked her to take her place elsewhere.

In the smallest provincial town a hostess can never have a sofa too large for her requirements if she desires to keep on amicable terms with all her neighbours.

The right-hand corner is the Holy of Holies, and is always reserved for the governor's wife, if she graces an assembly with her presence. Beside her would sit the wife of the official next highest in rank. Official rank has since times immemorial taken precedence in Finland. An unmarried lady under no provocation would be tempted to seat herself on the sofa, it being considered the height of indecorum to do so, as well as being a sure and certain sign that she would remain a spinster to the end of her days.

Needless to say, a mere man would be hounded out of the room if he even attempted to commit such an appalling breach of etiquette.

My sofa, alas! has lost its grand dignity since it crossed the seas to an alien country. It now stands in a little old house in Kent, and looks quite forlorn amongst its new surroundings.

Sometimes in the gloaming I seem to see the stately row of upright ladies who used to occupy it when my grandparents gave an entertainment in their hospitable home. I was only a small child in

those days, but was allowed to peep through the chink of a door to watch the arrival of the guests.

The ladies were most ceremonious, and would perform deep curtseys, which my grandmother would return with equal grace, before she would conduct them herself to their allotted places on the sofa.

Those fine manners are fast dying out in the capital, but I for one am glad they still linger in the provincial towns. Gamla Karleby has the reputation of being the most old-fashioned town in Finland.

It certainly had a most decorous air as we steamed into the little station. We had been running along parallel with the high-road for some time, the same old road that my grandmother's chariot had once come rumbling down.

My first impression of Gamla Karleby was that of an old lady's ringlets kept carefully in place. Each house was an exact image of the other. Each possessed a small garden, shadowed by a tall tree. All was orderly and straight. One shuddered to think of a leaf being out of place in that old town.

If a storm had the temerity to disturb those trees, I believe they would all shake with the same precision as an old lady's curls—they would never become ruffled.

The town was granted its privileges on September 7, 1620; but as far back as 1469 it had already an existence, and the parish church, which is about a mile out of the town, is one of the oldest in Finland, dating from 1470.

The town has a certain interest for Englishmen, because when the English fleet sailed round the

peaceful coast of Finland during the Crimean War, firing their guns and setting fire to all towns within their reach, it was here that they met with resistance from the inhabitants.

A party of Blue Jackets essayed in their ships' boats to enter the inner harbour of Gamla Karleby; but the people of the town and peasants from the neighbourhood fell upon them, and many of the attacking party were killed, the rest taken prisoners, and all their boats captured.

The English boats were held as trophies by the people of Gamla Karleby, and are still to be seen in a small pavilion, erected for the purpose, in the public gardens of the town.

The Englishmen who lost their lives were buried in the old cemetery, and the inhabitants collected amongst themselves a sufficient sum to erect the handsome monument that marks their resting-place. This was the only time during the war that the English set their foot in Finland; but hardly a town on the coast escaped unscathed from the British shells, and an incredible amount of damage was done by the fleet under the command of Admiral Plumridge during their brief but stormy cruise through Finnish waters.

That was a period of great excitement all over the land. I remember my grandmother telling me that the fear of the destructive British squadron was so great, that she and numbers of others fled with their children from the capital inland, and buried their silver and jewels in case of the expected landing of the British.

This old-fashioned town has always been reputed

for the beauty of its feminine inhabitants, and when Alexander I., during his imperial progress through Finland, passed through it, he was met by a score of lovely maidens, who strewed flowers in his way.

This enviable reputation is still deserved, judging by the good looks of a young bride who left by our train, followed by a tremendous gathering of friends. The bridegroom was as unobtrusive as he usually is on these occasions, and I could not spot him until the last bell had rung, when he joined his pretty bride. Hearty cheers were raised as we steamed out of the station.

Seeing a wedding party reminded me of a quaint custom which is still kept up in some aristocratic families in provincial towns. The bride and bridegroom consider it their duty to show themselves to the townspeople during the celebration of the wedding feast, which is always held in the evenings. The newly married pair are conducted to a balcony or window by two groomsmen, who stand on either side of the couple, with lighted candelabras in their hands.

The amusing part of this somewhat embarrassing ceremony is, that the assembled people in the street below invariably make loud personal remarks about the charms of the bride and the corresponding lack of them in the wretched bridegroom, quite irrespective of the truth of their assertions. It is considered since time immemorial the correct thing to do so.

Until quite recently all weddings in Finland were solemnized in the evenings, in the home of the

bride's parents. Day weddings are now becoming fashionable in Helsingfors, the ceremony taking place in a church; but this is still considered the height of modernity. Those not initiated in the etiquette of Finland might find themselves as awkwardly placed as myself, when I attended, a few years ago, an afternoon wedding in a church in Helsingfors. I had garbed myself in the usual raiment considered the correct attire for a similar occasion in London, and found, to my consternation, all the men in evening dress, and the ladies in low-necked gowns, with plumes and jewels in their hair.

The train, on leaving Gamla Karleby, skirted the field of Oravais. Its green sward, a hundred years ago, was the scene of the last big battle fought in Finland, when no less than two thousand dead were left on the field. This was the last great struggle for supremacy between Russia and Sweden.

Hard by is the ancient stone church of Oravais, and the old-fashioned wood-built parsonage with its vivid yellow-painted walls. It is in this parish that the once-sought-after "Spring of Gratitude" is to be found. The waters were formerly considered to have a miraculous power, and during the Catholic times many pilgrimages were made to it. Close to the spring there is a large stone, which is still known as the rosary stone, where the people, before the church was built, used to kneel and repeat their rosaries.

The railway line soon afterwards passed the beautiful Kyro Lake district, but the shadows of evening obscured the view.

Amongst the numerous waters of Finland this is by repute one of the most picturesque. The easiest way to visit it would be to break the journey at Wasa, the most up-to-date town on the coast, with excellent accommodation for travellers. The town itself is called the garden of Finland, owing to the numerous boulevards and trees in it. The new part of the town is essentially modern, and the surrounding archipelago is dotted with charming summer villas, which, during the last ten years, have nearly doubled their number.

Old Wasa, with the ruins of the ancient castle of Korsholm, built in 1280, is situated about six miles west of the new town. It was upon the ramparts of Korsholm Castle that the cross of Christianity was first planted in that part of Finland. The castle was for many centuries the scene of numerous fights, and was a sanctuary during war-time for the inhabitants of the district. Of the once formidable fortress nothing remains to-day but a few crumbling walls and the grass-grown moats which once surrounded it.

Another point of interest in the same neighbourhood is Storkyro Church, a wonderful relic from old times. The date of the church, 1304, is cut in the wall above the east window. Inside this ancient edifice the walls are completely covered with curious old frescoes, which were discovered in 1855, when the church was restored.

The paintings are of great antiquity, and number more than a hundred. They had probably been whitewashed during the Reformation.

The stones with which this church is built are so

enormous, that tradition says it was the last work of the giants of the North, who formerly existed in these parts. Another work attributed to the giants is the so-called giants' bridge in the same district.

This bridge consists of a series of immense boulders that stretch themselves across a narrow creek, and all but touch the other side excepting for one stone, the largest of all, that has fallen on the shore itself, and which makes it impossible for any one, excepting a giant, to step across the intervening strip of deep water.

This uncompleted bridge is said to be the handiwork of an irate giant, who became annoyed at the sound of the church bells, and began dashing boulders into the water to enable him to get over to the other side. In the midst of his labours an old peasant woman happened to pass, and commenced jeering at the tattered condition of his nether garments, painfully evident in his stooping position. The giant was so enraged at her gibes, that he took hold of the largest stone he could see and hurled it with such force that, instead of dropping into the water, it landed on the opposite shore, after which the confused giant turned away without finishing his task.

Kyro Lake, with its beautiful waterfall, which breaks through one of the surrounding cliffs, has a charming allegory attached to it.

The Spirits of the Water in the crystal lake had grown young again, and chafed at the restraining arms of the granite cliffs that surrounded them and kept them prisoners. They wanted to escape, to

rush out to the limitless ocean, towards the great unknown world. But the Mountain Spirits, who had since the beginning of all things clasped them in their arms, would not accede to their request.

For thousands of years the Spirits of the Water hurled themselves in vain against their enemies. Every spring they rose with renewed energy and dashed themselves with impotent fury upon them. The Spirits of the Mountains looked on scornfully, and beneath their shadows enticed the King of Ice to come earlier than elsewhere and quell the insolent waters with his iron hand.

But one spring, every stream and brooklet, every flake of snow, combined forces with the intrepid Spirits of the imprisoned lake. Down the hills they came in their thousands, and in one impetuous assault they threw themselves against the barrier of centuries. The mountain trembled and quivered, then burst asunder, and the liberated waters of Kyro Lake flew downwards in their mad career towards the longed-for ocean. Yet the Spirits of the Mountains, although conquered and bruised, had strength enough to throw a mighty rock right in the midst of the track of the escaping waters, against which they surge to this day, frothing with rage as they unwillingly divide forces and dash past on either side of the rock that bars their progress to freedom.

The shadows of evening had fallen quickly, and the steady rhythm of the train, as it rushed through the advancing mists, deafened the sound of those liberated waters.

Soon my memories of the past became more and more muddled. Giants and lovely maidens became

hopelessly intermixed, and I remember nothing further of the journey between Torneå and Tammerfors until the conductor informed me the next morning that we were on the point of arriving at our destination.

CHAPTER XVII

Early arrival—Tammerfors asleep—A cold welcome—A curious custom—Lack of comforts—Messrs. Maple & Co.—An invitation—Fine buildings—A modern town—The manufactories—The English Park—A Russian eagle—The ghost of a Scot—Old silver curios—The fashionable drive—Pynikki—A barbaric driver—Delightful scenery—Woodland glades—Youthful gatekeeper—A short cut—A temple of granite—Johannes Kyrkan—The high water-mark of modern worship—Simplicity of dress—Adam's garb—The garden of death—A gruesome picture—The redeeming touch—A captive sunset.

MY arrival at the "Manchester of Finland" reminded me of Viborg, in the matter of the laziness of the inhabitants. Apparently the making of money is forbidden at six o'clock in the morning at Tammerfors, for the whole town was still fast asleep. Every blind was down, every shutter closed, and the few people astir in the streets had that heavy mournful look of those who have been hastily aroused from their slumbers in a most unjust way.

The hotel was even worse than at Viborg. A dishevelled night porter stared angrily at me, as if I had disturbed his night's rest out of pure spite; and when I boldly stated that I required a room, he groaned aloud. Slowly he ascended the stairs in front of me, and paused outside a door on the second floor.

Before attempting to open the door, he commenced groping about with his hands along two sides of the door-posts. These tactics might alarm any one not accustomed to Finnish practices, but I had seen this little game played before. It is the custom in Finnish hotels to hang the key of a locked door in a prominent position outside it. After some moments' search, the sleepy porter gave the door a vigorous shake. It was locked securely. "The chambermaid has mislaid the key," he volunteered sulkily.

Then he shuffled down the stairs in his carpet slippers, and left me using the gentlest language I could think of under the circumstances. After a long wait, my key was eventually found.

But the room when opened was distinctly disappointing. It smelt stuffy and old. I was surprised, as a town of the size and appearance of Tammerfors ought to have had a hotel as up-to-date as itself. I thought what a slur this hotel in the imitation Manchester was on its great namesake. From my window I could look down upon the show-rooms of the largest emporium of Tammerfors—a shop which proudly claims to be the largest in Finland, and which prides itself on being a copy of "Maipul" (with apologies to Messrs. Maple & Co.), of London.

The early morning mists had cleared by nine o'clock, and a brilliant day seemed in store.

As soon as I considered it would be decent to show myself in the streets of Tammerfors, I sauntered out. On leaving the hotel, I turned to the right, and found myself in a large open square, surrounded with quite palatial stone buildings. In the centre of the square there came tumbling down

from the left a splendid waterfall, or rather, a sequence of waterfalls—a foaming staircase through the town that had built itself around it.

This was the famous cataract from which Finland's Manchester obtains its power. Across the turbulent waters a stately bridge of glistening grey granite has been lately erected, which connects the two quarters of the town. The bridge was completed in 1900 at a considerable cost. The old iron suspension bridge still spans the river higher up, where the principal manufactories are situated.

Among these are the imposing new cotton mills belonging to the family Von Nottbeck. The old mills that formerly stood in their place were the pioneers of this wealthy and prosperous city, and were erected in the year 1820 by a Scot, Mr. J. Finlayson, who afterwards sold the concern to the Nottbecks.

Belonging to their mills is the so-called English Park, laid out along the shores of the river. Permission to visit the park is readily secured by applying to the head office at the mills.

From its banks a grand view of the cataract and river is obtained. On a rock in the river, which is connected with the park by an iron footbridge, there stands the immense bronze eagle with outspread wings, which shelter the two tablets commemorating the visits of two Russian Emperors who have been there — Alexander I., in 1819, and Alexander II., in 1856.

Opposite the entrance-gates of the park is the new Gothic chapel erected by the Von Nottbeck family for their mill hands.

All is arrogantly new and pretentious at Tammerfors—I doubt if the ghost of that Scot would recognize it. That the town has leapt into its present prosperity can be judged from the fact that towards the end of the nineteenth century it was a small village, the inhabitants numbering only 463, while in the year 1904, when the last census was taken, there were over 45,000.

There is no trace of the original village left now. The only thing unchanged is the mighty cataract that gives forth the millions of money gathered each year from its strength.

It is a clean and orderly town, and looks mightily pleased with its own precociousness. There are one or two good silversmiths, in whose shops I found some nice old silver and some curious gold antique rings, which formerly were worn by the "peasant kings" in this neighbourhood.

After I had hunted up what I could in the way of curios, I hailed a cab, and told the driver to take me to the heights of the famed hill of Pynikki, which overlooks the town on the left. This is the principal drive of the place, and on Sundays and holidays the road to it is crowded with vehicles and pedestrians. I had hit upon a most barbaric-looking driver, with a long, flowing red beard and small eyes peering beneath his shaggy brows. It struck me the mane and tail of his horse had supplied him with his hirsute ornaments, for they matched exactly.

The horse was as shaggy as his master, and shared his curiosity about myself. Both kept turning their eyes towards me at every convenient bend in the road.

The road, also, after leaving the town, twisted and turned in a most unexpected manner, and became steeper at every corner. The great panorama of lakes, into which flow the waters of the cataract, are seen far below that elevated road, and look from that height like narrow streams winding their way between the numerous islands which guard the outer entrance to the town.

That ascending road reminded me of the mountain roads above Menaggio on the lake of Como, and the vivid blue of sky and water added to the illusion of Italy. But very soon Finland asserted herself again. The road turned sharply inland, and we left the vista of sunlit waters behind us and entered the shadows of a real Finnish forest. The contrast was highly picturesque, and the people of Tammerfors ought to be congratulated on not having "improved" this delightful bit of woodland. The trees were grand and restful, the ground was carpeted with thousands of ripe blue whortleberries and crimson cranberries that gleamed amongst their own green foliage.

Charming footpaths called to one from every side to follow their tracks, as they dipped and rose through enchanting glades down which the sun danced in untrammelled freedom. In some parts the road was nearly perpendicular, but the plucky little horse pulled us up most gallantly, with now and again a word or stroke of encouragement from the bearded monster.

The Pynikki tower was quite a first-class example of its kind, which was only befitting a town as wealthy as Tammerfors. I was charmed with one thing in that tower, and that was its female attendant,

who levied upon all who desired to ascend it a tax of one penny. She was the smallest thing in gatekeepers that I have ever seen, and when I was ungallant enough to ask her age, she blushed mightily as she answered proudly, "Seven years." She had the gravest blue eyes, bare legs and feet, and two long flaxen plaits. In her miniature hand she held her insignia of office—an immense key, almost as large as herself.

The drive back was by another and much shorter way than the one which we had climbed up.

When we re-entered the town, I told the monster to take me to the new church of St. John (Johannes Kyrka), which I had been told to be sure not to miss seeing.

This church is the spoilt child of the inhabitants, and was only completed in 1906. The site selected for it is one of the highest in the town, on the opposite side of the river. The road to it is still not actually completed, and masses of *débris* could be seen as we approached it. The outside of the church struck me as uncommon and stately. It is built of solid blocks of highly polished grey granite, with roofs of red tiles. The contrast, although bizarre, was pleasing to the eye. The monster murmured some words of admiration as he drew his horse up outside the principal door. Somehow, even the entrance struck me as queer for the purpose it was intended for. It was unusual to see a church porch of such dimensions, and still more unusual to see a granite waiting-room leading out of it, in which a woman sat and sold postcards. I politely asked her if the church could be visited. Either she was not talkative or perhaps

she was annoyed at the imbecility of my question, because the only reply she vouchsafed me was to point silently to a small door that seemed out of proportion to that lofty entrance. I did not continue a conversation so palpably undesired, but opened the small door and entered the church. I have rarely been so overcome by sheer amazement as I was at that moment.

If all the inhabitants of Tammerfors rise up and stone me the next time I visit their town, I must say that, as a temple of Christianity, I have never imagined anything further removed from all preconceived notions of what such a building should be than their Church of St. John! The name is the only Christian thing about it.

The interior is a gigantic rotunda, reminiscent of a Roman theatre, with an immense gallery encircling it. Below the gallery is a deep frieze of solid grey granite, upon which is painted a huge garland of thorns, dotted with crimson roses.

This garland is held up at regular intervals by absolutely naked boys, painted life-size. Some are bending beneath their burden, some are erect, some are swaying, some have roses against their naked flesh, and others are cut with thorns.

This astonishing production is the work of a Finnish artist, and is meant to represent the sorrows of life, and how some mortals bear it erectly and some are crushed beneath their burden.

Over the altar, or what I imagined was meant to represent it, there was an enormous fresco, a colossal painting, also the work of a Finnish artist, with figures more than life-size.

This picture is called the "Resurrection." The colouring is misty and grey, and from a score or more open graves there comes a procession of women wrapped in their shrouds and still with the grey-white pallor of death upon their faces. But the most remarkable figure is that of a man of herculean proportions heading that procession.

He is attired in the simple garb of Adam, minus the fig-leaves. As a study of anatomy for medical students, that man is drawn with a master hand, but in what way he is deemed to lead your thoughts heavenwards completely puzzles me. The pastor must be glad that in the pulpit his back is turned to him, and probably the pastor's wife keeps her eyes discreetly downwards.

Another painting also arrested my attention. It is named "The Garden of Death," and is even stranger than the others. I had imagined hitherto that skeletons were always considered sufficiently clothed with their bones. But the artist who created that picture was evidently of a different opinion. In it he has portrayed a whole company of skeletons working in a garden, their lack of flesh partly hidden by the robes of a Capuchin monk. The effect is horrible, and their sightless eyes and bony fingers are not easily forgotten. The garden itself is still more gruesome. The plants depicted are horrible fungi—plants of death!

I think the morbid realism of that astounding church reached its high-water mark in that painting. Yet there was one thing that was good to look at, and that was a circular west window. The colouring of that window was gorgeous; it was as if the

heart of a sunset had been painted upon those glass panes. I have never seen such a wonderful bit of rose colour as that window.

Then I turned my back on that fearsome church, and fled to the pure light of the world outside.

CHAPTER XVIII

An ideal excursion—An old enemy—Ten years ago—A primitive carriage—Salutations on the road—First view of Kangasala—An English village—Venerable church—Curious legend—A steep climb—Gorgeous panorama—A queen of sorrow—Liuksila royal domain—Two Field Marshals of Sweden—Drive through forest—A poppy-red cottage—The toy of a princess—King Edward and the Finnish maid—A story of to-day—Tavastehus—Ancient castle—A ruling family—Credulity of the peasants—An example—A disturbed night—Famous country seat—A large house-party—Hospitality of Karlberg—A garden of flowers—An artificial lake—View from tower—A luxury—Raising of fish—Fortunate housekeeper.

IF Tammerfors in itself failed to attract me, there was at least an idyllic spot in its neighbourhood which quite reconciled me to my stay there. This was Kangasala, the rival of the famed Pungaharju, near Nyslott.

You go by train to the station of Kangasala, and thence by road to the village, a distance of seven miles. The prosperity of Finland's Manchester has spread to the suburbs of the town. The railway line passed through wide stretches of cultivation, with well-to-do farms on either side.

Everything spoke of success. The very cows grazing in the rich meadows were fatter and larger than their poorer sisters in the north. In the distance

clouds of smoke from the many chimney-stacks of Tammerfors made me wonder if it was true that only two days ago I was breathing the pure, unadulterated air of the Polar Circle. But the factories of Tammerfors could not spoil a meadow of wild flowers set in the midst of those cultivated fields.

I remember that meadow distinctly, it came so suddenly in sight—a mass of giant bluebells, ox-eyed daisies, pink phlox, yellow buttercups, and countless other varieties of flowers, all growing pell-mell in a chaos of colour.

That the progressive inhabitants of that district should have allowed that flaming meadow to exist in their midst was astonishing.

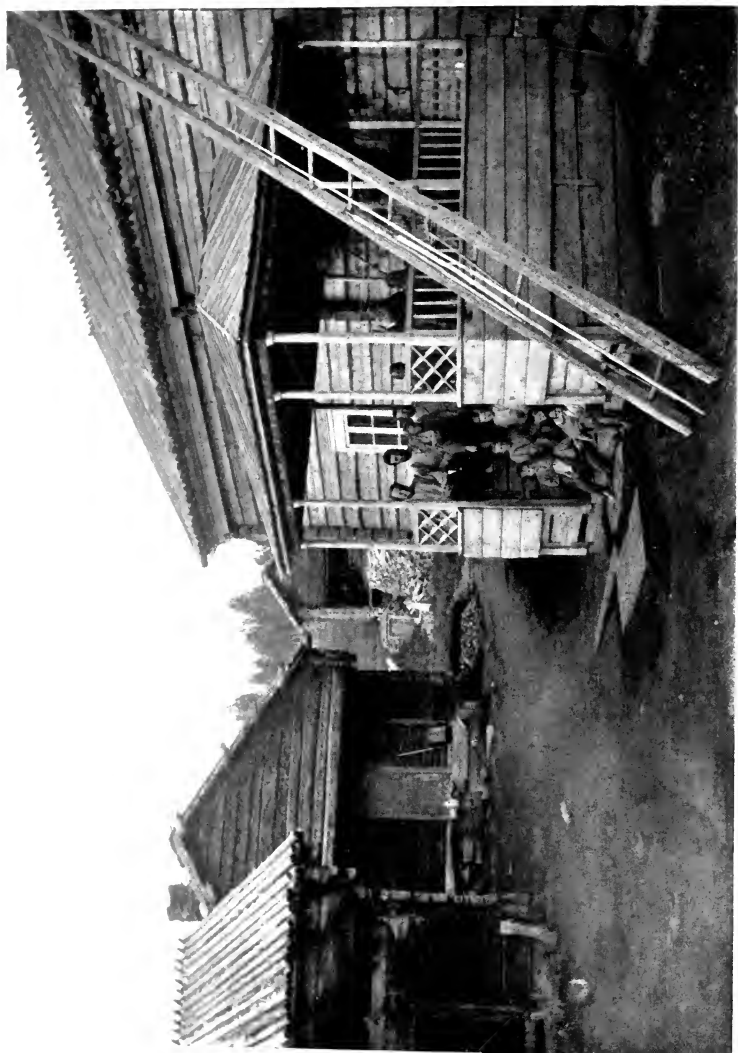
But a stranger soon becomes aware that in this northern land some surprise is always springing upon him. That is one of the undoubted delights of Finland.

As the train stopped at the little roadside station of Kangasala the civilization of Tammerfors might have been a hundred miles off.

Certainly there were no signs of progress here. In fact, as the train steamed off again, I half thought that I had been stranded here by mistake. An urchin with bare feet and red hair stood looking at me mischievously on the other side of the palings that divided the miniature platform from the road. I made a bee-line for him, but the young rascal evaded me, and ran up the road like a rabbit. As he was the only living thing about I had to follow him.

Outside the palings, in a clearing of the forest, I saw a small log-built house with a roofed-in

Law of
California



OLD-FASHIONED POSTING INN

porch as large as itself and the timber grey with age. From the porch there hung a sign with the words "Posting Inn" written in Finnish and Swedish. It was the first real old-fashioned inn that I had fallen across this summer. Fortunately for the comfort of travellers, those inns have nearly all disappeared. I have vivid recollections of a journey through Finland ten years ago, when those awful grey inns of evil-smelling memory were the only accommodation to be had for travellers off the beaten track.

The inn that now met my eyes did not inspire me with alarm; on the contrary, I felt quite benign towards it—the reason, of course, being that I was not going to spend the night there!

In the porch I found mine host, an old peasant with a distinctly sulky countenance. I asked him if he could oblige me with a trap of some kind to take me to the village. He scratched his head dubiously. I knew that type of Finn, they belong to those log-built inns, and it is against their principles to accede too quickly to any request. If I had hurried him I knew it would have been fatal, and I should probably have waited on until my return train to Tammerfors was due. Evidently I surprised him by saying the roads were in good condition. I knew that I was telling an untruth, but a Finn is always pleased if you say his roads are good, just because he knows they are so confoundedly bad.

He left off scratching his head, and called to some unseen person in the house, "Lars, go and find the horse."

The words sounded rather ominous to my ears.

"Finding a horse" is at times a lengthy affair in a country where a paddock has no boundaries.

Lars turned out to be my red-haired urchin. At closer quarters he looked more disreputable than ever. The merry twinkle was still in his eye, as he slowly went forth to do his master's bidding. His present dilatoriness was peculiarly irritating to me, who had seen his fleetness of foot a few minutes before.

However, Lars was better than he looked, and after a wait of half an hour or so, I had the pleasing message brought to me that "the carriage was waiting my convenience." The carriage turned out to be a marvellously antiquated and springless peasant cart, covered with the mud of many past journeys. The horse that had been found was not in its first youth, and the harness was almost entirely composed of odds and ends of rope.

The place of honour in this carriage was a wooden board placed across the front, with a small perch behind for the driver, who turned out to be no less a person than Lars himself. Mine host stood on the doorstep, and bowed as we departed.

The old horse started forth towards the forest with so fine a flourish that he nearly brought us to grief over the first rut, and I nearly said good-bye to my elevated seat without shaking hands.

After that first great bump the old horse soon got into his pace, and by the time the second mile was covered I was quite at home with the vagaries of my springless "carriage." Another cart, exactly similar to mine, kept slightly in advance of us the whole time. There would have been nothing noticeable

about this, excepting that the driver of the leading "carriage" was so taken with curiosity about me that he never turned his eyes from our direction, and could just as easily have tied the rope reins to the back of his cart, as far as guiding his horse went. The animal, however, plodded on, with complete indifference to the negligence of his driver, contriving to evade the ruts far better than we did. But the deepest ruts could not prevent the drive from being delicious. The road seemed at times only a track through the forest, and the trees stretched their branches right across our path.

The aromatic smell of the pines and the wild fruits was so refreshing that it was as if an immense scent-bottle had been broken in my honour by the fairies of that forest. Once we met a procession of six empty hay-carts, with their drivers standing upright in their swaying two-wheeled vehicles like Roman charioteers. They all gravely doffed their wide-brimmed felt hats as I passed by. This act of old-time courtesy to a stranger was delightful amongst those romantic surroundings. Soon after I had passed that quaint procession the road diverged from the forest, and the first view of the far-famed lakes of Kangasala came in sight—an enchanting vista of blue waters and lofty hills. At the foot of one of the hills nestled the little village of Kangasala, mirrored in the deep, clear water, with its ancient church in the background.

It was on that hill that a king, Gustavus III. of Sweden, when he visited the place during the latter end of the eighteenth century, had exclaimed in his unbounded admiration of the beauty of Kangasala,

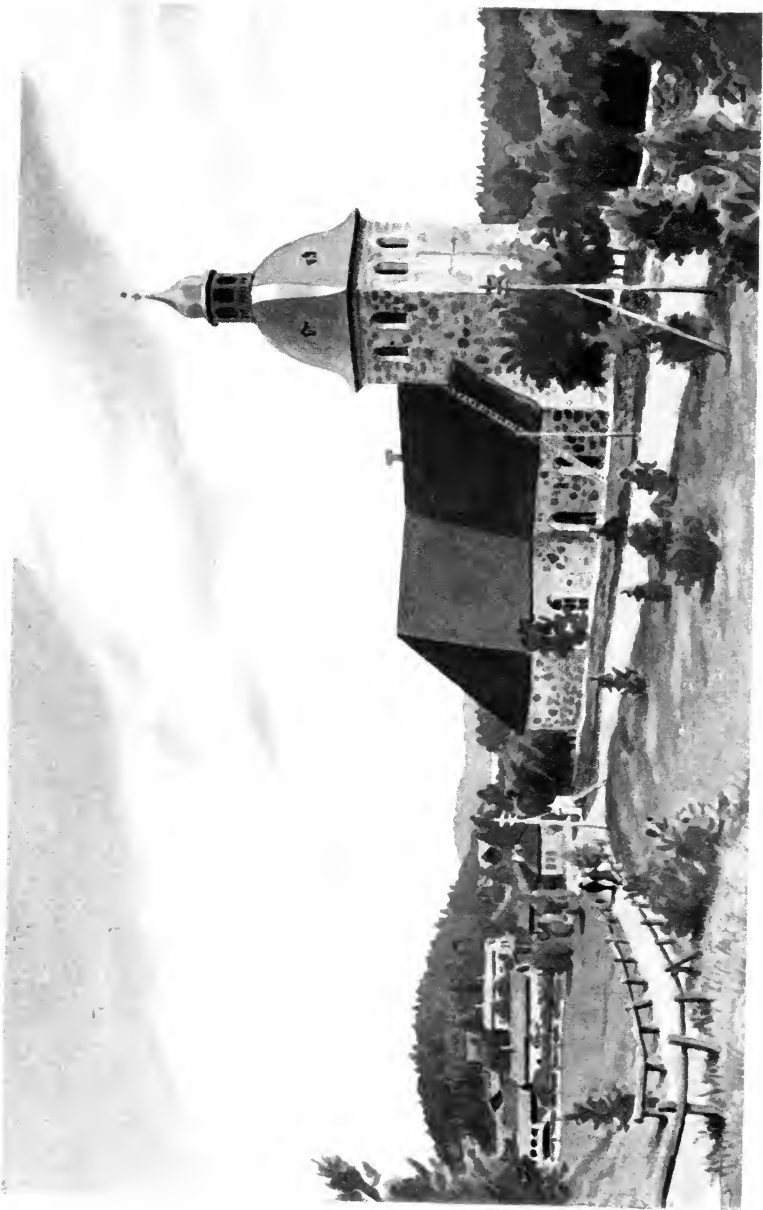
"Surely it was here the devil tempted our Lord, when he showed Him all the glory of the world!"

The village of Kangasala was charmingly picturesque, with detached cottages bordering either side of the steep old village street, and little gardens in front of them ablaze with old-fashioned flowers. The whole picture reminded me of some English village struggling up a hillside in search of the sun.

That the village of Kangasala had found it was very evident. The sun appeared to frame those beflowered cottages with a garland of youth and happiness. The only thing that is venerable in that village is the ancient church in its midst. But that church was born old, just as the people who live within touch of it were born young and would die young. The stones of the Kangasala Church are magnificent in their age.

Those ancient stones are painted with the softest colours of passing time, but there is one exception. In the south wall there is a stone, deeply seared with streaks of red running down it like drops of falling blood. That stone has a strange history.

In the sixteenth century a young girl of noble family in the neighbourhood gave birth to an illegitimate child, but to shield herself she placed the fault upon an innocent peasant girl. The unfortunate victim was condemned to death—her head to be severed from her body in sight of the whole community on the village green, and in the presence of the righteous damsel of high degree who had brought the evil-doer to the hand of justice. As her head fell beneath the knife of the executioner,



KANGASALA VILLAGE AND CHURCH

to
1900

the assembly were startled to hear a voice, coming from the wall of the church saying, "As long as injustice lives, this stone will bleed."

To this day that stone is pointed out to strangers as the bleeding stone of Kangasala. Curiously enough, it does possess the appearance of being bloodstained.

The interior of the church possesses a finely carved pulpit, with the date 1661 carved on it. In the organ gallery are hung old oil paintings of Charles XII. of Sweden, Karin Månsdotter, the Finnish peasant girl who became a Swedish queen, and her daughter, Princess Sigrid, as a child. There are also a few relics from the Catholic period kept in the sacristy.

Immediately to the right of the church is the winding footpath that leads to the top of the hill, from which the wide-stretched lakes and countless hills of the much-praised panorama of Kangasala can be seen in all their striking beauty.

A modest restaurant, with large outside verandas, has recently been built at the foot of the hill for the use of the tourists who come year by year in increasing numbers to this favoured spot. Of late years numerous villas, which can be hired for the summer months, have sprung up upon these enchanted shores, and must tempt many to prolong their stay there.

Lars pulled up outside this restaurant. Probably in his mind the charm of Kangasala lay herein. The old horse looked remarkably little the worse for his heavy pull over the intervening seven miles we had come.

The winding footpath tempted me so much that,

greatly to the surprise of Lars, I preferred to venture up it before eating my lunch.

I ought to have been satiated with views by this time, instead of which I found myself fascinated with that wooded hill of Kangasala.

For nearly thirty long years a broken-hearted woman, in the awful solitude of vain hope, had watched those green hills and blue waters for the coming of deliverance. A deliverer did come at length, but he rode the white horse of death.

That woman was Karin Månsdotter, the hapless Queen of Erik XIV. of Sweden. A halo of romance enshrouds her memory. She was born a wild flower of Finland, a simple peasant maid; but a king found her good to look upon, and raised her to his kingly rank. Few queens have had a more tragic fate, and none have borne their misfortunes with a greater fortitude than the beautiful Karin of Finland. For a brief while the crown rested upon her brow, and then it was wrested from her. The King was imprisoned, and died an exile, his brother usurping his throne. She was doomed to spend the long years of her widowhood in one of the royal hunting-lodges in the most distant part of her native land.

Her enemies chose Liuksila, an old castle on the shores of Kangasala. Nothing now remains of the original building. It was destroyed by fire soon after the unfortunate queen's death in 1612.

A modern house stands to-day beneath the fine old trees of the once royal park of Liuksila, which still, in its decay, has a certain grandeur about it.

The sun was shining on those stately trees of Liuksila as I watched the wooded shores, where

Karin Månsdotter had so often stood and looked upon her lost crown in the crystal depths of Kangasala's dreamy waters. Now her queenly rank has again been bestowed on her as she sleeps her last sleep beneath the vaulted roof of Finland's ancient Cathedral of Åbo, in the splendid black marble sarcophagus erected to her memory in 1867.

Another historic home on the shores of Kangasala is Vexio, situated on the eastern portion of the lake. It was there that the Countess de la Gardie, the mistress of Johan III. of Sweden, gave birth to her two sons, Pontus and Jacob de la Gardie, who afterwards became famous generals, and died Field Marshals of Sweden.

After a hasty lunch at the restaurant, I managed to find Lars and the ancient horse. The drive back to the station was delightful. The recent rain had scattered drops of water on the petals of the wild flowers, and hung like dew from the overhanging branches of the trees. Thousands of ripe red cranberries and blue whortleberries glistened with moisture amongst the heather and ferns.

The forest looked as if it had been carpeted with a wonderful mosaic, that would have outshone the finest pavement in the Vatican of Rome. The diversity of colouring was wonderful, as well as the variety of mosses and wild fruits.

All things apparently grew in friendship in that forest. Tall mushrooms raised themselves above the pink heather. Hosts of bluebells peeped out here and there and everywhere. Giant pink phlox held up their torches of rose-tinted blooms above the tiny pearl petals of the linea—the pink violet of the

Finnish forest, and the most beautiful and most modest little flower in the world. The aspect of the forest changed at every turn. The eye had not time to weary of one scene before another replaced it. As we emerged beneath the open sky a typical Finnish cottage, poppy-red in colour, with snow-white window-frames and black door-posts, came into view like a befitting "curtain" to those forest pictures.

I should like to follow the example of the late Prince Albert Solms of Brauenfels, who built at Homburg for his charming Finnish wife, Princess Ebba, a fascinating toy in the form of an exact copy of a cottage of her native land—but, alas! I can afford neither. To add to the illusion of this princely toy, every article of furniture was made in Finland, as well as the carpets and hangings that were hand-woven by Finnish peasants. This tiny four-roomed cottage was always occupied by the Prince and Princess for a few weeks each summer, and I have pleasurable reminiscences of the hours I spent there. A host of distinguished personages have visited it, amongst them King Edward of England, who called one morning unexpectedly on the Princess, and in the absence of the host and hostess, was shown, at his own request, over the quaint abode by the Princess's old Finnish maid, who had no idea of the visitor's exalted rank. On her mistress's return, she informed the Princess that an English gentleman had been there, who had tried her patience severely by his curiosity in wishing to see every corner of the limited premises!

But the toy of Princess Ebba Solms was, after all,

only a copy of the original article in her far distant childhood's home. The finest copy could never be quite the same as that poppy-red cottage on the borders of Kangasala forest.

Lars was quite affectionate in his leavetaking, and hung over the palings of the station to give me a last salute as the train took me back to civilization and Tammerfors.

The following morning I continued my downward career through Finland. My next halt for the night was at Tavastehus, one of the first provincial towns of Finland to become connected with the capital, by the opening of the railway as far back as 1862.

The town itself was founded in the year 1638, but suffered so severely from a fire in 1831 that the old part of it was practically destroyed.

The present regular and well-planned town is, therefore, of comparatively recent date, although there seem to be centuries between Tammerfors and Tavastehus.

Tavastehus is distinctly provincial in appearance, the greater part of the buildings, unlike the palatial stone houses of Tammerfors, consisting of the old-fashioned one-storied wooden houses common to all towns of an older date in Finland.

But Tavastehus boasts of something that its modern rival can never possess, and that is its ancient castle, which can hold its own with the other fortified castles of Finland.

The Castle of Tavastehus, or Kronoborg, as it is also named, is one of the oldest in the country. Some historians put the date of the castle's first existence as

far back as 1249. At all events, it is authentic that it was a royal residence in the reign of Queen Margareta of Sweden, who occupied it in the year 1389.

The most brilliant period of the castle was, however, under the autocratic rule of the noble family of Tott, who owned it during the Middle Ages. The arrogance of the Totts reached such a climax that King Christian II. of Sweden, in 1520, condemned the proud Lord of Kronoborg, Åke Tott, to have his head cut off. After this trenchant measure, the power of the Tott family rapidly declined.

Half a century later the castle became State property, and was so strongly garrisoned that it was the principal military centre of the country until the close of the eighteenth century.

After the last war, in 1809, it degenerated into a State prison, which it has continued to be ever since.

Tavastehus is the capital of Tavastland, the most central of Finland's seven provinces. It is reputed one of the best cultivated districts in the land. Hops and flax have been successfully grown there for over three centuries, and the skilful weaving of the inhabitants is unexcelled.

Strangers to Tavastehus should not fail to go to see Miss Wetterhoff's hand-weaving school, which is renowned for the beautiful fabrics woven there.

Amongst all the inhabitants of Finland the Tavastland peasant is the best worker and the poorest. He is quiet and matter-of-fact, with none of the poetical characteristics of his brothers in Savolaks or Österbotten. The Tavastland peasants are also held to be the densest of all the people in Finland, and many are the tales told of their stupidity.

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TAVASTEHEUS CASTLE

The following anecdote is a good example of their credulity. A party of seven men were cutting hay close to the shore, when one of them perceived a fish in the water. Wishing to kill it, he swung his scythe round; but instead of killing the fish, he managed to cut off his own head. The rest accused his nearest comrade of having done the deed. "No, no," the man protested, "I had nothing to do with it. He" (pointing to the dead man) "did like this;" and to illustrate his statement, he also cut his own head off in exactly the same manner as the first. Four more followed suit one by one, and at last there was only a single survivor, and he, working out the puzzle for his own enlightenment, cut his head off too!

Another story of the Tavastland peasant is that when they found salt too dear they met together in council, and decided to sow salt in their fields instead of wheat.

Tavastehus in itself brings no special remembrance to my mind, except the marvellous sunset that greeted me on my arrival. It lit up the old castle in a sheen of rose light, and transformed the waters of the lake on which it is built into one luminous pink pearl.

That night I slept ill. The hotel at Tavastehus is the only one during my tour through Finland which I advise travellers studiously to avoid.

In the intervals of that disturbed night I dreamt of that wonderful rose-lit castle, and when morning dawned I imagined all must have been a dream. My castle had turned into a drab colour, and the water was no longer a pink pearl, but grey and misty.

I had made up my mind to continue my journey to Åbo with the first train I could conveniently catch,

when an invitation was brought to me to dine and sleep that evening at Karlberg, the princely country seat of Colonel Hugo Standerskjold, in the near neighbourhood of Tavastehus.

I had often heard of the magnificence of Karlberg, and of the charm and boundless hospitality of its genial bachelor host, who has the reputation of never being so content as when his many guest-rooms are all occupied.

I can verify the statement, for when I arrived at Karlberg, I was overcome by the number of guests there. No less than sixty covers were laid for dinner, and the greater part of this large assembly belonged to the house-party.

But then the resources of Karlberg are phenomenal. The Colonel has lately made another addition for the housing of his many visitors. This was the delightful wing in which was the room assigned to me. This wing, in the form of an immense bungalow, is separated from the house by a few yards, and consists entirely of a spacious suite of spare rooms. Each room is decorated in a different colour, and most luxuriously furnished. I felt almost bewildered by the luxury of my surroundings, after the modest requirements that I had accustomed myself to during my journey.

I was glad that Karlberg had come at the end of my travels, and not at the commencement.

Colonel Standerskjold has spent a fortune on his gardens and park, which have no rival in Finland. The famed gardens of Karlberg were in their zenith of summer glory when I visited them—especially the banks of scarlet begonias, thousands of plants

massed together, that made a gorgeous spot of colour visible halfway across the lake which faced the front of the house.

The park is so extensive that our host placed at our disposal his carriages and horses. The stables of Karlberg rival the house in size. At least fourteen victorias and pairs were in waiting at the appointed hour, and formed a complete ring round the large circular drive.

I could hardly credit the information that the park, only a short while back, was a wild piece of forest land. Money and labour had certainly performed a miracle. Even groups of palms had been sunk in the earth, looking absolutely unconscious of the fact that the greater part of the year they were obliged to exist in hot-houses.

Perhaps the most noticeable thing in that park was an artificial lake that had been dug to form a centre-piece to an Italian garden. On the borders of the lake was an ornate little boat-house, with boats attached to it fashioned in the form of large swans. The garden was festooned with roses that reached down to the water's edge, and encircled a charmingly picturesque summer-house in their midst.

Beyond that delightful garden the procession of carriages was stopped outside the vineries and peach houses, and we were all bidden to descend and eat of the fruit thereof.

The hot-houses were magnificent, and the peaches large and luscious. After the refreshment we were driven to the imposing granite tower recently built on the highest point of the park. This tower, as well as the park, is, by the kindness of the owner, open

to the public, and is much visited by people from Tavastehus.

The view from the summit of the tower is superb. The surrounding country can be seen for miles through the telescope placed there for the use of visitors. The old Castle of Tavastehus appears almost within touch through those powerful lenses, that brings even Hattula Church, a distance of thirty-five miles off, distinctly into view.

Hattula Church dates from the twelfth century, and in Catholic times was the scene of frequent pilgrimages to a famous shrine that it contained. The interior of the church is richly decorated with old frescoes, the earliest dating from the fourteenth century.

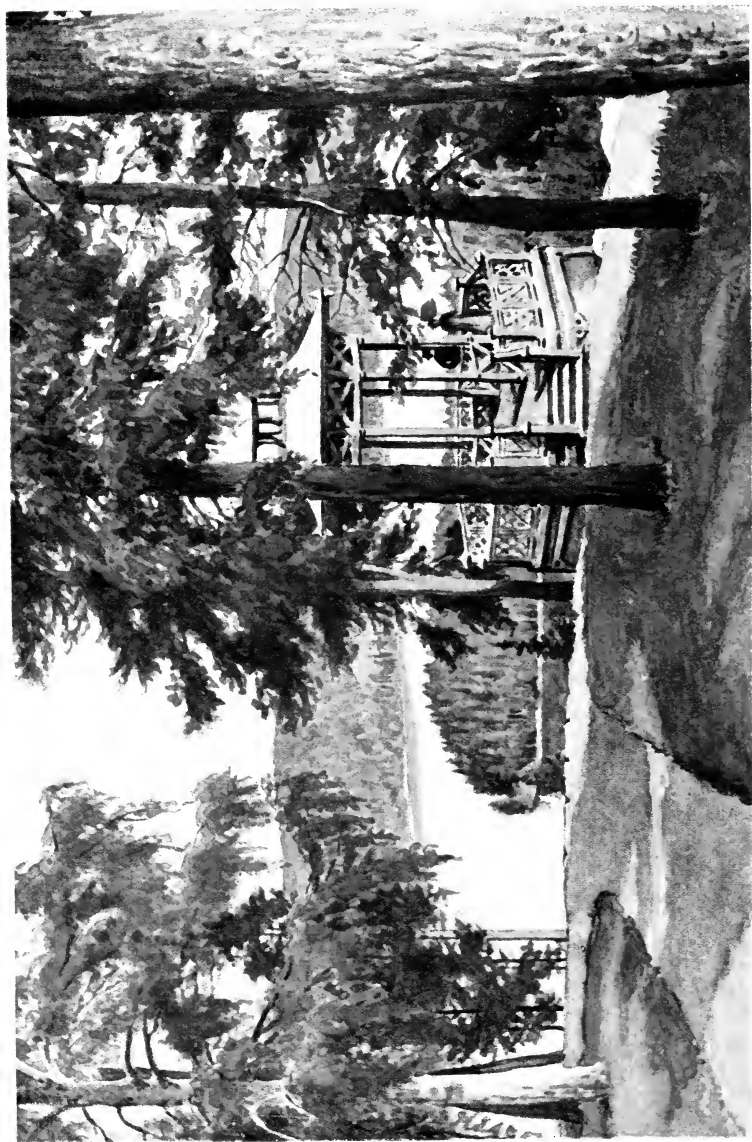
Hattula is an easy distance from Tavastehus by road. Unfortunately I could not find time to visit it, as I was due in Åbo the next day. Before I left Karlberg I went and inspected the splendid fishing preserves, which are the special hobby of the Colonel. In these tanks of graduated heat the fish are hatched direct from the spawn, which is obtained from Russia and Germany.

The finest quality of fish is therefore always obtained at Karlberg. The fortunate housekeeper has only to send down word to the keeper how many trout, etc., she requires for the day, and the fish promptly appear.

The raising of the spawn is exceedingly difficult, and the first three stages of the life of a fish require the greatest care.

In the first stage the water has to be filtered through fine muslin, and the food consists of the larvæ

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VIEW FROM KARLBERG PARK

of flies and mosquitos. The second stage, the water is of lower temperature, and dried fish, ground into meal, is fed out. Thirdly, the youthful fish are regaled with ants' eggs, and so on, until they are served up with mayonnaise sauce!

Another detail was that the pipes through which the air is carried to regulate the different temperatures of the water, have to be constructed of wood, as metal would rust and be harmful to the spawn.

The size of the Karlberg fishing preserves is not to be wondered at, when my host told me that his housekeeper requires daily about fifty pounds of fish. The hospitality of Colonel Standerskjold is boundless, and everything is on the same lavish scale.

It was with much regret that I refrained from accepting my genial host's kind invitation to prolong my visit.

I felt proud of my powers of self-denial as I obtained my last glimpse of the verdant park of Karlberg, through the windows of the railway carriage which was taking me another step towards the completion of my journey.

CHAPTER XIX

The wrong end—A cultivated district—Mustiala—Treasure at a railway station—Dinner à la Russe—Arrival at Åbo—Ancient capital of Finland—Vanishing old Åbo—Modern buildings—Venerable cathedral—Friend or enemy?—A matter of opinion—A page of history—Mighty prelates—Swedish traditions—The nobles of Finland—Scottish ancestry—A famous shrine—Town council of Åbo—Imposing monuments—The tomb of a Scotchman—The wedding-ring of a queen—Antique silver—Old and new style—Reminiscences from other days—A bygone generation of children—Åbo Castle—The museum—Original contents—A brilliant past—A gruesome resting-place—Memorable campaign—General Keith—Romantic love affair—A short-lived peace—The great fire—The generosity of an Emperor.

PROPERLY speaking, I should have commenced my tour at the point at which I was finishing off. Åbo, the ancient capital of Finland, towards which I was speeding, is the fountain head of everything Finland possesses. Åbo is the cradle of its civilization and culture.

On the banks of the narrow stream of Aura, which runs through the town, the cross of Christianity was first planted. The first converts to Christendom were baptized in its waters. The mother church of Finland was built there. The first fortress of the country can still be seen in the venerable walls of Åbo's historic castle, which looms so grandly above the town that it has guarded for so many centuries.

The first academy of learning was in Åbo. The centre stone of the Government was for centuries in that old town, to-day humbled and conquered by its sister, Helsingfors, which wrested from Åbo, in 1819, its ancient title of capital of Finland.

The railway line between Tavastehus and Åbo passes through well-cultivated land, principally wheat. It is in this province that Mustiala is situated, the chief agricultural school in the country.

The fine estates of Mustiala belonged formerly to the baronial family of Horn, who were given them by Erik XIV. of Sweden, in 1563.

His consort was the unfortunate Karin Månsdotter, who was imprisoned for so many years at Liuksala, on the shores of Kangasala.

But even in this flourishing district the stations were few and far between. At one, where we made a stop for dinner, I saw the most perfect antique silver coffee set that I have ever had the joy of beholding. It was of immense size and massiveness, finely wrought, with a garland of grapes and vine leaves around the edge of the gilt-lined ewer and sugar-basin.

Such a treasure at a railway buffet seemed an extraordinary possession. I asked the manageress how it had come there. She was unmistakably a lady by birth, and seemed in no way surprised at my question: "Nearly all strangers make the same inquiry," she replied proudly. "That coffee service belonged to my great-grandmother, and was her mother's before she had it. I have been asked innumerable times to part with it, but have not had the heart to do so yet."

If anything were required to prove the honesty of the Finns, that coffee service would have been sufficient. The owner only looked bewildered when I asked her how she had the courage to leave it in such an unprotected position, with a daily inroad of unknown passengers.

In Finland it is the custom to serve one's self at the station buffets. The dinner itself is laid out on a centre table, each dish flanked with a pile of plates and cutlery. Small tables are placed round the room, where the traveller sits after he has helped himself, without any restrictions to quantity. It is the same price if you go well through that centre table without missing anything, as if you only munch a piece of toast for economy (close-fisted friends, please note!).

This form of dining is also the most usual in Finland for larger dinner parties in private houses. Treble the number of guests can be entertained, and the service reduced to a fraction, compared with the work entailed if the covers were laid in the usual way.

I have frequently dined in houses of quite ordinary size where the hostess has managed to squeeze in forty to sixty guests in this manner. The entire suite of rooms at her disposal, if the dining-room itself is not sufficiently large, is thrown open for the dinner.

I believe the custom of entertaining in this fashion originated in Russia, where hospitality on a large scale is very prevalent.

I will not give the name of that station, as I do not wish the poor lady to be besieged by collectors

of old silver, striving to overcome her reluctance to part with it.

That was the only incident that I remember before Åbo was sighted.

The immediate approach to Finland's ancient capital was over an endless carpet of pink heather, through which the train crept slowly, as if impeded by its luxuriant growth, which almost touched either side of the train.

The station of Åbo had quite an important look. Even porters were visible as we drew up. Cabs were to be had without number, and the police constable outside the station was busily occupied in handing out small copper discs on which the number of a cab was engraved, to those desirous of vehicles.

It is strictly against the rules for a cab at the station to leave the ranks before his number has been called out, or for a traveller to enter one that has not been selected by the constable in charge.

The newest hotel in Åbo is the Hamburger Børs, quite up-to-date and elegantly furnished, with a good restaurant. It is a small hotel, so unless rooms are reserved, it is frequently impossible to get in there. I drove there on the chance, but no room was vacant, so I put up for the night at the old Hotel Phœnix, which is still by far the most imposing-looking hotel of Åbo, overlooking the principal square of the town.

Åbo is very familiar ground to me, and yet each time that I renew my acquaintance with it some new building meets my eye, and some old landmark has been swept away. I am sorry that the old place is

being so modernized. Those aggressive stone buildings, which year by year rear themselves above the lowly wooden houses, have done their level best to spoil the aspect of an otherwise perfect model of an old-world town.

Åbo possesses a certain indefinable charm. Perhaps it lies in its memories of a grand historic past—perhaps in the old-fashioned sedateness of its wide streets and straggling houses. In its venerable cathedral and its castle it boasts the two finest buildings in Finland.

I think I should advise a stranger to visit the cathedral first. From the Phoenix Hotel the cathedral is easily reached by foot, and the first impression of it, seen from the bridge that crosses the Aura, is particularly fine. The narrow stream, with its numerous craft made fast to the low-lying quays, the bank of trees between, and then the massive walls of the old cathedral towering above them, combine to form a picture not easily forgotten.

Modern Åbo is not seen then. The most arrogant new building is dwarfed into nothing beside that grand old church, which has watched the centuries come and go with the same calmness as the ebb and rise of the waters of Aura at its feet, that for ever glide past towards that unseen fjord which carries them out to the high seas.

The history of Åbo is the history of Finland from the year 1157 to 1827. It has had many vicissitudes in its remarkable career. During the political clouds that shadowed the close of the nineteenth century in Finland, Åbo gave evidence of the old grit that has been the strongest weapon of the Finns.



ABO CATHEDRAL, AND MARKET BOATS

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Åbo has always been to the fore in a fight, as its annals of past wars will verify. Åbo's first records were the interminable fights between Christendom and heathenism during the whole of the twelfth century. But the real history of the town commences after the peace of Nöterborg in 1323, when the most brilliant period of Åbo's existence took place, under the autocratic reigns of the all-powerful Roman Catholic bishops that ruled Åbo and Finland from 1157 to 1522. Amongst the twenty-three bishops of the Roman Hierarchy who have occupied the episcopal throne in Åbo, there are three whose names stand out on the pages of history—Bishop Hemming, who died 1367 (canonized 1514); Magnus II., who died 1452; and Magnus III., who died 1500.

The brilliancy of their reigns has never been surpassed in Finland. The pomp and wealth of their surroundings appears incredible in our days. But this phase of Finland's history is well-nigh as forgotten as the remains of those once mighty prelates in their mouldy coffins hidden in the vaults of Åbo Cathedral.

But it was to these princes of the Church that Finland owed its primary civilization and the first seeds of culture. Under the rule of Hemming, 1354, the first library was founded, which had the reputation of being the finest in the North, and would have been of untold value in our age. It was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1827. A hundred years later the first hospital was built in Åbo by Magnus II., who also built the first mint in 1440.

Åbo became so wealthy and renowned at this epoch that rich merchants from Germany and Holland

settled down there under the protection of the Church, and trade became highly prosperous.

The history of Åbo and Finland can roughly be divided into four distinct periods. First, the Catholic dynasty, 1157-1522; secondly, the Reformation period, 1522-1600; thirdly, the first emancipation of the people, 1600-1721; and fourthly, the commencement of commerce, 1721-1809, when Finland definitely became a Grand Duchy of Russia, after having been under the protection of Sweden for nearly seven centuries.

No wonder the old Swedish traditions still have a firm roothold in the heart of Finland. Seven centuries is a long spell in which to grow accustomed to each other, and the aristocratic families of Finland have all been grafted from old Swedish stock.

The province of Åbo is the stronghold of the Finnish nobility, and nearly all the historic homes of Finland are to be found there. A host of well-known names spring to my mind. Some are only to be seen on the graves of the knights sleeping in Åbo Cathedral. Among these are the powerful Flemings, a family which had all but royal rank during the Middle Ages; and the Horns, who worthily upheld Finland's traditions of bravery. These two proud names are now extinct; but there are still families in existence which can trace their lineal descent from knights in the days of the Crusaders.

It is curious how many of the aristocracy of Finland have surnames of purest Scotch extraction—Ramsay, Montgomery, Fraser, Hamilton, Douglas, to mention only a few. The present head of the Ramsay family is General Baron Ramsay, late

Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish troops. The Counts of Hamilton and Douglas belong to the Swedish Upper House, but are connected by inter-marriage with the Finnish nobility.

No one interested in this particular subject should omit a visit to the Finnish House of Nobles in Helsingfors. There the arms and quarterings of all the noble families of Finland, past and present, with the dates of their creation, are hung on the walls of the Knights' Hall.

These distant Scottish ancestors were in the most instances poor soldiers of fortune, who had enlisted under the victorious banner of Sweden in the days of Gustaf Adolf II., to fight for him during the Thirty Years' War in Germany, and had won the honour of knighthood for their prowess in the field.

Some returned to their native Highlands, but some elected to become loyal subjects of the country of their adoption, and founded the families that to-day form a great part of the existing aristocracy of Sweden and Finland.

The Pope's last champion in Finland was Arvid Kurk, the twenty-third and last Roman Catholic Bishop. His end was tragic, as he was drowned together with all his retinue in crossing to Sweden from Åbo in 1522.

With the incoming wave of the Reformation Åbo lost a considerable part of her former prestige. The pilgrimages to the famous shrine of St. Henrik, patron saint of Finland, in Åbo Cathedral were discontinued. Slowly the immense treasures collected by the Church were stolen, or disappeared. The most valuable relic of all, the sarcophagus

containing the bones of St. Henrik set in gold and precious stones, was taken by the Russians in 1713. The fate of this historic relic is not known for certain, but it is generally considered that Prince Galitzin brought it as a trophy to the Czar Peter, who probably had it placed in one of his palaces.

The other almost equally famous reliquary, containing the remains of Bishop Hemming, who died in 1366, was removed by order of the Town Council of Åbo from the cathedral to the museum only a few years ago. This act of extraordinary vandalism and sacrilege met with strong opposition, which was, however, overruled, and the coffin containing the body of the famous prelate may be seen to-day, duly numbered, amongst the other objects of historical interest in the museum of Åbo!

Probably the fine feeling and good taste of the existing Town Council of Åbo would have ordered the same fate for the Sarcophagus of St. Henrik, if it had not been removed from their charge.

The yellow waters of Aura's narrow stream were like gold in the brilliant sunshine, as I crossed the bridge towards the cathedral. One enters by a side-door, as the principal entrance is only opened on high festivals.

The first impression of this historic temple does not give an adequate idea of its age, and it is difficult to realize that it was founded as far back as 1258, and consecrated in 1300.

The interior is finely proportioned—three hundred feet long, one hundred and twenty-seven feet wide, and one hundred and fifty feet high. The old chronicles are filled with details of the sumptuous

decorations that formerly enriched it, but that are now only left to our imagination.

There are still some ancient wrought-iron gates, dating from the fourteenth century, that are unique. The numerous side chapels are filled with imposing monuments erected to the memory of many a gallant soldier and knight. Amongst them is the beautiful white marble tomb, wherein a brave Scotch soldier has been resting for nearly three centuries: Colonel Samuel Cockburn, who enlisted under Gustaf-Adolf II. of Sweden, and died in Åbo, 1621. He was given a military funeral, and was followed to his last resting-place by the famous soldier-king in person, who was visiting Åbo at that time. The tomb is engraved with the arms of the Cockburn family, interwoven with the thistle of Scotland.

In the chapel immediately opposite is the splendidly engraved shell of wrought steel and bronze which contains the remains of Field Marshal Torsten Stålhandske, a hero of the Thirty Years' War, who died in 1644. Two suits of his own armour, battered with much fighting, stand on either side of the coffin, and give a strange touch of realism from those stormy days.

The chapel nearest the high altar on the left, going up the nave, is noticeable for the imposing black marble sarcophagus in which the unhappy Queen of Erik XIV. of Sweden, Karin Månsdotter, rests in peace. So far the Town Council have not elected to disturb her by removing her to the museum. In this chapel is the exquisitely painted glass window by Swertschoff, depicting the Queen

in robes of white satin, wearing the purple mantle and crown that brought her so little happiness.

The treasury of the cathedral is not shown to the general public, except by permission of the chapter. It contains a very valuable collection of old silver, as well as a few objects of historical interest.

I wished I had had the time to linger over them, but I could only carry away a faint recollection of its treasures. For one moment I held the slender gold wedding-ring of Karin Månsdotter in the palm of my hand. The Queen's fingers must have been very small, it was so tiny. Amongst the numerous antique silver ornaments I noticed a large silver baptismal bowl, with the date 1644 engraven on it; also a pair of gorgeous silver candelabra, 1654. A set of four two-branched silver candlesticks in the form of snakes were most uncommon, as well as an exquisite centre candelabra of massive silver, depicting an angel holding in her uplifted arms two outstanding branches for candles. At the foot of this was a gold plate, on which was inscribed, "Presented by Brigitta Horn, 1654." But it is supposed to be of much older date than the year of its presentation.

These are only a few examples of this unique collection of old silver, which would take a whole chapter to describe. The magnificent candelabra are still used on the high altar on festival days of the Church.

Sightseeing in general is the most tiring occupation I know of, and before I went to the castle I turned into one of the excellent cafés that are one of the attractions of Åbo. The two best known are

Wiberg's and Lehtinen's. The variety of cakes is bewildering to any one accustomed to the limited choice of an English confectioner's.

Åbo rivals Helsingfors in this particular, and the famous Fazers of Helsingfors could not have had a more lavish display of tempting goods than I saw at Wiberg's. The original shop I remember well. It belonged to the old Åbo that is so rapidly disappearing. It was a one-storied wooden house, with the shop window set so high that the tallest man could not obtain a glimpse of the goods displayed in it. A flight of steps led the prospective customer to the shop, which was a modest room of small dimensions, with a counter at the further end on which were set out cakes and sweetmeats of a quality to which, with all the plate-glass windows and parquet floors of to-day, the present shopkeeper has not been quite able to attain.

The old shop belonged to Widow Wiberg, and she and her shop were as well known as the cathedral by the inhabitants of Åbo. She was the quaintest, dearest old lady it is possible to imagine, and welcomed every customer with a delightful curtsy. I remember as a youngster she never failed to add one sweet overweight, and always offered me a sweetmeat from one of her piled-up dishes. To refuse the old lady would have offended her beyond reparation. This was not a special favour towards myself, but equally bestowed on all her customers.

After her death the old shop was pulled down and the present one built in its place. The passing of Widow Wiberg's shop was missed by many. The old-world sweetmeats for weddings and funerals that

were such a feature of her establishment are still manufactured by her successor. The funeral sweetmeats give me a shudder. Somehow the idea of eating a sweetmeat wrapped up in black crêpe and tied with black ribbon never appealed to me. But tastes differ, and there was never a funeral of any distinction in Åbo or neighbourhood that did not have a goodly supply of Widow Wiberg's sombre sweetmeats; a curious custom that is still *de rigueur*.

Another custom that has only recently died out, and perhaps still exists in some parts of the country for all I know, was to hand to each mourner on leaving the house of the dead, a goodly-sized loaf of rich currant bread, shaped in the form of a wreath. They were called funeral loaves, and sometimes the quantity required was so great, if it happened to be a town funeral, that they were sent from the bakeries in big farm waggons, borrowed for the occasion.

This habit of distributing good things at funerals was keenly appreciated in the nurseries of a bygone generation of children, and I remember being told by Baron Max Aminoff, the former chief of police in Åbo, that the excitement of his early days was scanning the newspapers to see if any funerals of importance might be in store for lucky children who possessed a papa who could bring them back pockets filled with divers delicacies they would never obtain in the ordinary course of events.

After an agreeable break of sightseeing in the comfortable café of Widow Wiberg's successor, I drove to the castle.

Slottsgatan (Castle Street) is one of the longest

UNIV.
CALIFORNIA



ĀBO CASTLE

streets in Europe, exceeding two miles in length. Being within the town limits, the cab fare is only fivepence, a most unfair boundary for the poor horse, which has to jolt over the two miles of cobble stones between the cathedral and castle, which form the two extremities of the Slottsgatan. It is advisable to keep the cab waiting while visiting the castle, if a walk of over a mile to the nearest cabstand is not desired.

The only part of the castle which is now in use is the large suite of rooms looking into the inner courtyard. This serves as the Åbo Museum. It is delightfully unlike the usual idea of a museum, and consists principally of a series of long rooms with deep window embrasures and low ceilings, filled with a wonderful collection of antique furniture, bric-a-brac, costly mirrors, pictures, ancient state beds, etc., arranged as much as possible according to the epoch and style of the different objects. Each room, therefore, forms a picture in itself. Part of the furniture and pictures have been presented by former owners to the museum, and part has been bought in from all parts of Finland by a fund set apart for that purpose by the town of Åbo.

Formerly, duplicates of antique furniture or bric-a-brac that came into the museum's hands were allowed to be resold for the benefit of the fund, and most of my own collection of old furniture and prints have come from that source. A better guarantee of their genuineness could not be acquired, as only certified lots that can be clearly traced are accepted at the museum. The prices, compared with

those of London or Paris, were a mere song; but alas! those halcyon days are over.

Åbo Castle is so steeped with historical memories that it is almost impossible, in a book like this, to give even the briefest picture of its many vicissitudes during the seven centuries that it has stood on guard by the mouth of the Aura, and looked across the three distinct arms of the wide fjord into which the little river empties itself.

Åbo Castle was for centuries the defender of Finland. Countless warriors have sailed up that wide fjord, to be met with a stinging repulse from that grim fortress. Swedish kings have held council there. High revels have often resounded through its venerable walls. Once a Finnish noble and his proud Polish consort held a court there, that for reckless extravagance and brilliance was unequalled.

The clash of arms and the sound of music succeeded each other as one turns over the pages of its history. The outside walls of the castle are almost intact. But where are the magnificent pictures, the gorgeous hangings, the gold embossed leathers, the splendid tapestries that the autocratic rulers who lived there used to surround themselves with? They are as completely gone beyond our ken as the spirits of the gallant knights and fair ladies who once trod those luxurious apartments. The dismantled rooms are full of unseen ghosts. One room is still untouched, and that brings before the mind only a sorrowful incident.

It is the small, dark room where King Erik XIV. of Sweden was imprisoned by his brother, Duke Carl, who usurped his throne.

Another link with the past is the cell called the Malefactors' Resting-place. The irony of the name must have been an added thorn to the unfortunate prisoners whose grim lot it was to rest there.

A trap-door in the floor is still shown, through which the prisoner was let down to a black dungeon six fathoms deep. Once a day a gleam of light broke above him, when the meagre allowance of bread and water was lowered down, only just sufficient to keep body and soul together. Cold, darkness, hunger, and stench were the means of torture to curb a prisoner in Åbo Castle during the Middle Ages. The modern State prison that overlooks the castle would have seemed a palace of luxury to the unfortunate men who dwelt in that chamber of hideous torture.

The last occupation of the castle by an enemy was in the year 1742, when the Russian troops, under the command of General Keith, made an unexpected capture of Åbo. The remarkable feature of this campaign was that a truce was signed between the conflicting parties, and a series of festivities were held in honour of the self-invited guests. Ball succeeded ball, and the inhabitants vied with each other in their endeavour to show their esteem for the chivalrous Keith.

During those festivities the gallant general lost his heart to the beautiful Eva Mertens, the daughter of the mayor of the town. The story of their romantic passion makes one of the most charming incidents of this epoch. Keith, who was considered to be one of the proudest men of his time, became the slave of this fair Finnish maid. The

impassable gulf that existed at that time between those of different rank prevented the marriage of Keith and Eva Mertens, who was not of noble birth. She elected, however, to throw in her lot with her lover, and followed him abroad after the termination of the campaign. To the end of his days Keith showed her the same chivalrous devotion. After his death she returned to Finland, and lived to an extremely old age, and was highly respected and beloved by all who knew her.

Amongst my possessions that I particularly value is an old pewter tankard, on which is engraved, in a woman's handwriting, "Eva Mertens—Åbo—1742." I found it in a cottage on an estate in the neighbourhood of Åbo.

This campaign was brought to an end by the declaration of peace between Russia and Sweden, when the Russian troops vacated Åbo.

Prior to their departure the town was illuminated, wine ran like water, and the populace went mad with joy at the prospect of peace. The governor, Count Cedercreutz, had an ox roasted whole in the market-place for the poor. Over the entrance of the University was hung a gigantic illuminated scroll depicting two hands clasped together, with the words "Pax, Æternum Fœdus." The following morning the device was intact, excepting for one letter, the "Æ" in the word Æternum, which altered the construction to the ominous phrase of "Pax, ternum Fœdus." Many remembered that strange augury when the much desired peace was broken only fifty years later by the last and most devastating war that Finland had ever been harrowed with.

Curiously enough, Åbo, which had always taken such a prominent place in previous wars, took no part in that last campaign, and was left undisturbed.

But what war had not done, fate accomplished after peace was once more declared. War and the rumours of war had only just died away. The country had begun to forget the horrors it had gone through, and a blessed time of prosperity set in. Suddenly all Finland was aroused by the news that the old capital was practically laid in ashes, and the entire population rendered homeless.

This memorable fire broke out on the evening of Tuesday, September 4, 1827. It originated in the house of Hellman, a butcher, through the carelessness of a servant girl, who by mistake had set alight a pile of tallow shavings from some recently steeped candles.

The inhabitants of Åbo had already retired for the night, when it became known that Hellman's shop was on fire. The fears of the women and children were soon quieted by the knowledge that Hellman's shop was situated in the highest part of the town, and they went to sleep again. That night in Åbo only the dead slept in peace.

A sudden hurricane burst over the doomed city and spread the flames from house to house. The bells of the cathedral rang out above the screams of the panic-stricken population, as they fled from the burning town.

The fire was so overwhelming in its fury that on the following Sunday the ill-fated town was still smouldering. The loss of property was enormous, but fortunately the cathedral and castle were

only slightly damaged. The greatest disaster was the burning of the renowned library, which was of incalculable value, possessing manuscripts dating from the fourteenth century.

All Finland helped in the rebuilding of Åbo, but the most generous friend it had in its hour of need was the Emperor Alexander I. of Russia. He gave three hundred thousand roubles to be divided amongst the families that had suffered the most from the fire, one million roubles towards the rebuilding of the city, and an immunity from all taxes for a period of ten years, as well as countless smaller benefits.

With this substantial aid the town soon rose again from the ashes. But the old glory of Åbo had vanished for ever.

CHAPTER XX

A pleasant prospect—The country houses of Finland—My first visit—Brinkhall—Old visiting cards—The oaks of Runsalä—Traffic of the river—The last battle—A well-known poem—A model dairy—A farming baron—Difficulties of farming—An excursion—Ruins of a palace—An ancient convent—A modern spa—Finland's oldest church—A gilded chapel—The iron grille—Art gallery of Åbo—Princely gift—Departure from Brinkhall—The *Pirate*—Motoring tour—Another century—Stately Svartå—A celebrated beauty—Princess Demidoff of San Donato—Largest land-owner in Finland—A delightful drive—Fagervik—Famous library—Bible of King Charles XII. of Sweden—Old engravings—A palatial cow-house—Final stages.

THERE is an old saying that the sugar is at the bottom of the cup. In my case it came true, because I spent my last week in the lap of luxury, crowding into it as many visits as possible to the principal country seats in the neighbourhood of Åbo. I was fortunate enough to be able to accept five invitations.

My opinion is that no tour of a country is complete unless one has seen some of the old homes, wherein the generations of men and women who have made the history of their land have lived and died.

I left Åbo early the following morning for a couple of days' complete rest amidst the charming

surroundings of Brinkhall, the delightful island home of Baron Max Aminoff, late Chief of Police in Åbo.

Brinkhall, about two thousand acres in extent, is two hours' distance by water from Åbo in summer, and half that time over the ice in winter. The estate was first owned, in 1560, by Hans Erikson, a deputy governor of Åbo Castle. The present owner is a member of one of the oldest aristocratic families in Finland, a family tracing its descent from the eleventh century, when the Aminoffs were Boyar-Princes of Russia.

The grandfather of my host was a celebrated courtier of Gustaf III. of Sweden, Count Johann Frederic Aminoff, who was in love with the sister of Count Axel Fersen, the well-known favourite of Marie Antoinette. His grandson has often told me personal anecdotes of that brilliant period which bring the past and our day strangely together.

Among the many treasures at Brinkhall, there is an old brocade casket, filled with faded visiting cards from that epoch. Amongst them are the cards of Count Axel Fersen, the Princess de Sagan, and a host of others. The number of titles inscribed on a single card would be very perplexing to our modern ideas. But there is a touch of the grand age about them. Some are not printed, but exquisitely written by hand in the pointed caligraphy of that time.

The open fjord between Åbo and Brinkhall is exceedingly picturesque, with the old castle seen in the background, and the stately oaks of Runsala rising in a mass of green on the right of the castle.

Runsala is an island in close proximity to the town. It has for centuries been famed for its natural beauty, and particularly for its oaks, which are the finest in Finland. It is nowadays connected with the town by a wooden bridge that adjoins the castle promontory. Some of the charm of Runsala has been spoilt by the numerous summer villas which have been erected on it, and which have transformed it almost into a suburban villa town.

The traffic of Åbo increases yearly, and the little motor launch that Baron Aminoff had placed at my disposal had some difficulty in finding a clear passage through the numerous boats coming up and going down the narrow river. The diversity of the craft was extraordinary. Large passenger steamers from England and Stockholm, old-fashioned three-masted sailing-boats, fishing-smacks, quaint barges, market-boats, spruce private yachts, small rowing-boats, of all sizes and shapes, pass and repass each other in a continuous stream that makes it no light matter to reach the open fjord without a collision.

The wide expanse of water, after the restricted confines of the river, comes so unexpectedly that the first view of Åbo fjord is a surprise. On the left, going towards Brinkhall, the fjord curves in a deep bay. This is Lemo Bay, and it was there the Swedish army landed during the war of 1808. They were met by the Russian forces, and a sharp battle ensued, lasting fourteen hours. The losses on both sides were colossal. Runeberg, the national poet of Finland, has touchingly described this memorable fight in his stirring poems, descriptive of this last campaign in Finland. He does not tell us of the heat of the

fight on Lemo's silent shores, but brings before us the tragic aftermath of a battle.

One sees the night descend and slowly cover the army of dead in shadows that hide the horrors of the day. In the shadows an old Russian soldier lies dying. His home is by the distant Volga, and in his ears the mother stream is calling to him. Close to him is a dead youth—a fair, blue-eyed boy of Finland. They were recently foes, but the peace of death has healed their enmity.

Suddenly on this scene the bent figure of a young maid is seen, looking down into the faces of the dead. The one she is searching for is at last found, and with a cry of anguish she throws herself beside the dead youth. But he answers not to her anguished calls.

The old Russian soldier feels a tear of compassion creep down his weather-beaten face. With a last effort he crawls towards the young girl, and expires at her feet. The ending lines of that beautiful poem are—

“Ty blott på lifvet hämden ser,
Vid grafven hatar ingen mer,”

which, roughly translated, signifies—

“Only in life revenge we feel,
Beside the grave none can hate.”

Lemo Bay was very peaceful that August morning, but I always see that scene, so vividly described by Runeberg, when I pass by those green shores.

The red-painted boathouse and landing-bridge of Brinkhall made my thoughts diverge quickly to another channel. I saw on the bridge my charming hostess, Baroness Léonie Aminoff, who would have

made a wilderness seem delightful to a weary traveller like myself.

There is nothing so refreshing as a warm welcome ; and Brinkhall is known for its open-hearted hospitality.

Summer life at Brinkhall is certainly idyllic. The days are spent in the open air. Cray fishing parties, picnics, walks in the fine park, sailing and eating are the chief occupations.

The meals are principally *al fresco*, and are served out-of-doors except when the weather is unpropitious. This delightful custom is the prevailing rule everywhere in Finland during the summer.

The pride of Brinkhall is the crystal clear lake, over three miles in length, set exactly in the centre of the island. A lake of such considerable size on a comparatively small island is not often met with. The water is almost as soft as rain water, and is used exclusively for household purposes.

The model dairy is also a feature of Brinkhall. It is up-to-date in every particular. As with all estates in Finland, the extent of the pasture land is always estimated by the number of cows it can keep. When an intending purchaser is looking out for a country estate he inquires how many cows it can graze instead of the acreage of the land.

Brinkhall has a herd of eighty to a hundred cows, which is a very moderate number for Finland. The principal profit on an estate is the butter, and also milk if the dairy is adjacent enough to a town. The butter and milk of Brinkhall find a ready sale in Åbo, where it is much sought after owing to its excellent quality.

Baron Aminoff is most particular in having only

the best blood in his herd. The greater number are shorthorns, some imported direct from England. Jersey and Alderney cows do not thrive under the rigour of a Finnish winter, when all cattle have to be stalled in huge cow-houses for a period of five months.

The sultan of the Brinkhall herd was an immense English bull, which rejoiced in the imposing name of Mi-lord. His temper was so uncertain that two heavy iron chains were required to keep him in his place.

Dairymaids have still an existence in Finland. No man would lower his dignity by milking a cow, which is considered to be unquestionably the occupation of a woman.

The little Baroness rarely puts her foot on the farm premises; but the Baron, on the contrary, since he left the cares of official life behind him, has turned into the most enthusiastic farmer. Everything is under his personal supervision, although he assured me the cares of official life are nothing compared with the task of attempting to make a farm pay, which is as difficult in Finland as in England nowadays! I could sympathize with him, as I also farm, on a small scale, in England, and so far have been largely out of pocket with the undertaking. Hops will soon be as extinct as the dodo, under the present unfair fiscal laws of England!

The house of Brinkhall dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century. The exterior is not prepossessing—a two-storied, white stone building, without any pretensions to good looks. But the interior is a charming contrast. The large suite of

reception rooms is well arranged, and contains a valuable collection of antique furniture. The room that is usually most admired is the so-called English drawing-room, which the Baroness has made into a picture of gaily flowered chintz, comfortable grandfather chairs, mushroom lampshades, a gallery of photographs, and an abundance of cut flowers, all of which are distinctly unusual features in the furnishing of a Finnish drawing-room.

During my stay there I made several excursions in the neighbourhood. One of the most interesting was a visit to the beautiful ruins of Kuustö, the former palace of the mighty Roman Catholic Archbishops of Åbo. Kuustö Palace was built in 1470 by Magnus I., where he entertained in a princely fashion.

His successors followed his example. The magnificence of Kuustö during the Middle Ages was known all over the North. The people suffered heavily from taxation for the upkeep of all this luxury. They had their hour of revenge, for, with the incoming wave of the Reformation, they were commanded by the reigning king, Gustaf I. of Sweden, to demolish the place that had cost them so heavily in the past. Therefore, in the year 1528, this splendid building was wilfully destroyed by the hands of the people. It was so large that several churches in the neighbourhood were entirely built with stones from the ruined Kuustö.

In our day we can still gather from the existing portions of the walls the immense size of the palace. The site on which it was built is the loveliest spot in the archipelago of Åbo. The shores

descend perpendicularly into the water, and the most enchanting views are obtained on all sides.

Many legends are connected with the once famous palace, and the country folk still believe that on moonlight nights the ghosts of the former princely prelates can be seen wandering down the grass-paved halls, where they had once held their brilliant courts.

It is said that great treasures are buried beneath the ruins of Kuustö. It may be true, when one thinks of the rich hoards collected there by its powerful owners.

Kuustö is easily reached from Åbo by daily excursion steamers during the summer. Another agreeable excursion from Åbo is a visit to the picturesque village of Nådendal, the oldest village in Finland. The waterway from Åbo is also charming, and gives a most varied impression of the surrounding country.

Nådendal existed in 1380, and was famed for its ancient convent, founded in 1395, the first erected in Finland. This convent belonged to the Order of St. Brigitta, and the nuns earned a well-deserved reputation for charity and industry during the many centuries of their existence.

In such high esteem was this order held that, even after the Reformation, they were granted a special dispensation by the generosity of the Swedish King to remain in their beloved convent. The King added to his protection the gift of the rents from a royal estate in the neighbourhood. The nuns would have been in dire financial difficulties if it had not been for this timely aid.

The last abbess of this famous order was Brigitta Kurch, who died in 1577, leaving only three nuns to survive her.

In the year 1581 the number had shrunk to one very old nun, Elin Knutsdotter. In an official letter of that year the people of Nådendal are warned of incurring the kingly displeasure if they in any way molest or disturb the old nun.

The convent is now a ruin, but the church is still intact. It contains a few relics, and St. Brigitta's well is as clear as in the days when the nuns offered the healing waters to the many pilgrims who came to seek there a cure for their ills.

In our day also the waters of Nådendal are sought for healing purposes, although not of a miraculous nature. It possesses a little spa, which is growing in popularity, and is well frequented in the summer by visitors. Nådendal Spa was visited by the late Emperor of Russia, Alexander III., in 1885. It is principally known for its mud baths, which have been highly beneficial for those suffering from rheumatism.

A simple casino, with a restaurant, has been lately opened for the benefit of the summer visitors; and there is also a hotel, as well as a few villas, to be let during the season.

Before leaving Brinkhall I visited the ancient churches of St. Marie and St. Karin. Both are situated in the immediate suburbs of Åbo, about a two-mile drive from the town. St. Marie Church is the mother church of Finland, and was built some years before the Cathedral of Åbo, when it had the distinction of being named the Cathedral Church of

Finland. It was founded by Bishop Henrik in 1160, on the site where heathen sacrifices used to take place.

The interior of the church is wonderfully preserved, with beautiful Gothic pillars and vaulted dome. But the outside has been spoilt by a particularly ugly modern iron roof. It has a gigantic altar picture of the Virgin kneeling at the foot of the Cross, and some fine old brasses. Otherwise, it cannot be compared to that gem of a little church, St. Karin, dating from the thirteenth century, on the opposite side of the river. It is not much bigger than a chapel, but the interior is so astonishingly bright that it appears larger than it really is. Like the church of St. Marie, it is also Gothic in design; but, unlike the older edifice, it dazzles the eye as one first enters it. All the woodwork, including the pulpit, the organ and gallery, and the pews, is painted white, picked out lavishly with gold, and further embellished with panels containing oil-paintings of various religious subjects. From the ceiling are suspended magnificent antique cut glass chandeliers, and on the walls there are some superb brass candle sconces from the fifteenth century. The chancel ceiling of this highly ornate church is frescoed with a curious Arabic design, said to be of great antiquity. On either side of the altar are two life-size paintings—one of St. Peter holding an immense key, and the other of St. Karin, patron saint of the church. Above the altar is a tremendous crucifix of carved and painted wood. A quaint gallery on the left side of the chancel, with an iron grille in front, was formerly set apart for the use of ladies of noble rank when attending Mass.

The view of Åbo Cathedral and the town seen from the hill of St. Karin is very attractive. The day I was there it was market-day, and a long procession of market-carts were wending their way from the town. It was pretty to see the numerous foals trotting merrily alongside their weary mothers in harness, which are obliged to take their offspring with them, as it would be too long to leave them without milk all day. The outlying farms are often many hours' distance from the town.

The palatial new buildings containing the modern art galleries of Åbo attract the eye. It stands boldly outlined against the sky on the highest point of the town. This imposing pile is the generous gift of two brothers, wealthy citizens of Åbo, Mr. Magnus and Mr. Ernst Dahlström. It has only recently been completed. No money has been spared in its erection, and it can vie with some of the best-known foreign art galleries. The interior is sumptuously decorated, principally in oak and polished granite. At the top of the spacious staircase, that leads from the vestibule to the chief gallery, are two fine marble busts of the popular donors. The pictures are mostly the work of Finnish artists, and include some fine examples of Lindholm and Munsterhjelm.

Edelfelt's last work, the half-finished panels for the Helsingfors University, depicting the opening of the Åbo University in 1640, the first of a contemplated series that was never completed, are hung there draped in black. There are also some very good copies of Rembrandt by Wladimir Swertschoff, as well as some delightful original paintings by the same talented artist.

As if to show the contrast between the past and present, this imposing building has been placed in the very heart of old Åbo. To reach it one has to traverse the steep narrow streets where the last remnant of the old one-storied wooden houses stand, but their days are numbered. I heard during my visit to Brinkhall that they are shortly to be pulled down, to make room for another block of the sky-scraping flats modern Åbo glories in raising.

Another remnant of past days is also doomed, the dear old black windmill in the Idrotts Park, for so many generations a familiar feature of the town.

I was so loth to quit the hospitable shores of Brinkhall that I nearly missed my train from Åbo, and it was only due to the efforts of the "Captain" of the small public steam launch, which goes by the name of the *Pirate*, and which took me from Brinkhall to Åbo, that I just arrived in time. This "Captain" is quite a character in the neighbourhood. He is owner, captain, steersman, and ticket-collector in one. He is rarely sober, but manages to fulfil his many posts with wonderful dexterity. He fixes his wheel up when he gets to comparatively open water, and then rushes round collecting the fares from sometimes forty passengers. He has more than once run ashore, and yet has the largest number of passengers on record. The greater number of them are frankly pirated under the very noses of the larger steamers that make the same circuit. The "Captain's" tariff is considerably lower than that of his sober rivals, his fare from Brinkhall to Åbo—a distance of two hours—being the moderate price of fivepence.

Baroness Aminoff told me that when her twin sister (who, by the way, is married to an English officer) is staying with her, the "Captain" always addresses them alike in her name when he sees either of them alone, but if they are together he looks a little disconcerted, as if conscious of the effects of a too generous libation before the journey, and he makes no reference to the embarrassing incident when next he takes a fare from either of them alone.

My next visit was to Svartå, belonging to Mr. H. Linder, a Court Chamberlain to the present Emperor of Russia. He inherited the fine estates of Svartå from his uncle, the late Baron Linder. Svartå is about three hours' distance by rail from Åbo and another hour's drive from the station to the house.

The reported luxury of Svartå was apparently true, because I was met at the station by a very swagger four-in-hand of well-matched bay horses. In this dashing concern the distance between the station and the house was soon got over. The roads were also particularly good, level and straight. They seemed well adapted for motoring, and Mr. Linder frequently uses his car for longer distances. A keen motorist could not do better than ship his car from Hull to Helsingfors, or Newcastle to Åbo, and do a tour along the coast-line from Åbo to Viborg. The railway line is still not completed on this route, and many out-of-the-way places could be visited. The high-roads, under the supervision of the Government, are excellent, and it is only the byways which have to be avoided.

Another point in favour of motoring along this

route is that good accommodation can be had in the larger coast towns, such as Hangö, Eknäs, Lovisa, Kotka, and Fredrikshamn.

The entrance to Svartå is through a fine avenue of lime trees that lead up to the house and extensive gardens which are laid out in the French style. The mansion itself is also built on the severe lines of an eighteenth-century château.

My host, Mr. Hjalmar Linder, with his brother-in-law, General du Pont, late commanding officer of the disbanded Finnish Life Guards, made up the house-party.

This famous regiment, of which the Czar was the honorary colonel, was the last remnant of the Finnish army to be demolished. The headquarters of the regiment were at Helsingfors, and the inhabitants still mourn the loss of their gallant Life Guards, a regiment which had always upheld its reputation for efficiency. It gained special distinction during the late Russo-Turkish War.

Svartå owns a princely suite of reception rooms. The furniture all belongs to the same period as when the house was built, and each piece would excite the envy of a connoisseur. The present owner has added to this collection some fine specimens of genuine antiques that he has obtained from various well-known foreign sources. Amongst them is the historic bureau given by Louis XIV. to the Marquis Chamillard. It is one of the best pieces of the French cabinet-maker's art of that century that I have seen.

The treasures of Svartå are so many that it is difficult to specialize one. But I must mention the

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QUEEN BIANCA OF SWEDEN
BY A. EDLFFELT

exquisite painting by Albert Edelfelt of Queen Bianca of Sweden and her little son. Of all his pictures, this was undoubtedly the most popular.

Mr. Linder inherited it from his kinswoman, the late Madame Aurore Karamzine, who died a few years ago at Helsingfors at the great age of ninety-three. This distinguished old lady was greatly beloved by all who had the privilege of knowing her, and her deeds of charity were endless. Her stupendous wealth came from her first husband, the celebrated Prince Demidoff of San Donato. After his death, she married Colonel Karamzine, also of Russian nationality. She was herself of Finnish birth, the daughter of a Baron Stjernvall, and was in her time a celebrated beauty. Her grandson, Prince Demidoff, is well known in London, where he is attached to the Russian Embassy.

I had the honour of occupying the State bedroom during my stay at Svartå. This apartment was the one used by King Gustavus III. of Sweden, the Emperor Alexander I., and the Emperor Alexander II. of Russia, during their visits to Svartå. The furniture and magnificent green silk brocade hangings are exactly the same as when the first-named monarch slept there during the eighteenth century.

The finest room of Svartå is the ballroom. It contains some good pictures, including the life-sized portrait of King Frederick I. of Sweden, by Pasch, and presented by that monarch to an ancestor of the present owner.

Mr. Linder is at present the largest landowner in Finland. He is just now in the course of constructing a private railway on his extensive estates,

and has largely developed the various manufactories on his property.

The Svartå ironworks are the oldest in the country, and were founded by Peter Thorvost, a manufacturer from Åbo, in 1608.

My next visit was to Fagervik, a neighbouring estate, belonging to Baron Hisinger-Jägerskiöld. Fagervik is also one of the old aristocratic homes of Finland, and has been in the same family for generations.

I can recall the drive between Svartå and Fagervik, a distance of twenty-five miles, as being one of the most pleasurable experiences of my tour. Everything was in my favour—a bright morning that had a touch of crispness in the air, and a pair of horses that fairly flew along the hard, smooth roads. The exhilarating clatter of the horses' hoofs was the only sound that broke the stillness of the forests.

The Fagervik estates are highly cultivated, and the immediate approach to the mansion is between immense fields of corn and rich pasture lands. The house itself is picturesquely situated on the top of a hill, with an old-fashioned terraced garden descending to the edge of a wide lake. The old park of Fagervik is enchanting, and encircles the shores of the lake. A quaint Chinese pagoda, from the eighteenth century, is built on a little wooded island on the lake, and is connected with the rest of the park by a footbridge. The trees of Fagervik well deserve the reputation of being the finest of any private park in Finland, and the most fascinating walks diverge in all directions beneath their shade. On a hot summer's day the place must be ideal.

The Dowager Baroness, who makes it her residence all the year round, is always surrounded by numerous children and grandchildren, and, therefore, Fagervik can never be dull. I most thoroughly enjoyed my short visit within its hospitable walls. All the charm of an old home dwelt therein. The generations that had passed seemed to have left a touch of something indefinable that we have not got, and that still lingered in the stately rooms they had once occupied.

The library of Fagervik is the pride of the family. It is a spacious apartment on the second floor, the walls lined from floor to ceiling with the rare volumes collected by their ancestors. These include the Bible of King Charles XII. of Sweden, with his autograph and date, 1646; also splendid editions of the "Olf Rudleks," published by Upsala University Press in 1679, and the "Suecia Antiqua," 1691.

Another book that interested me was a large volume, published in London in 1671, entitled "An accurate description of America," by Arnoldus Montanus, containing copper prints by A. van Meurs. It was so fresh that it might have come from the publisher's hands the day before, and showed that the past Baron Hisingers had not particularly cared to improve their knowledge of the English language!

The present owner of the volume made amends for the failings of his ancestors in that particular by speaking English fluently. At Fagervik there are also a series of four gigantic copper engravings, measuring four feet in length and two feet six inches in width, depicting incidents from the Thirty Years' War. These remarkable pictures date from the same period (1640). I consider that they must be unique

examples. I can remember no early engravings that even approach them in size or appearance. They were originally brought over to Finland from Sweden in 1772, and have been at Fagervik ever since.

The family chapel is only a few yards from the mansion, which is frequently the case in England, but in Finland very uncommon. It has a fine old painting of the Crucifixion over the altar, and some antique crystal chandeliers of exceptionally graceful design.

Before leaving Fagervik, I inspected the cow-house that is in course of erection. The Fagervik cows will be lodged in princely style. The new building is constructed of solid blocks of granite, and inside looks like a lofty banqueting hall. Large windows are placed on either side, with a double row of stalls down the centre, in which the favoured seventy cows will be housed. The entire herd numbers four hundred.

I had the pleasure of taking my host with me to Billnäs, the country seat of his kinsman, Baron F. Hisinger, who had kindly offered me an asylum for the night, on my way from Fagervik to Åminne, which was the last place I was visiting before my departure from Hangö.

Hangö is the principal port of Finland, from where the Finnish mail steamers, the *Arcturus* and the *Polaris*, leave for Copenhagen and Hull. Intending passengers can make the start from Helsingfors if they desire it, but it is better to go by train direct to Hangö, which is a much shorter route.

CHAPTER XXI

The rustle of corn—Peace and war—A feudal castle—The gift of a nation—Ghosts—The devil's aid—A contrast—Billnäs—A prosperous concern—A peace-offering—An unscrupulous servant—An ancestral home—A gallant courtier—A lovely Englishwoman—From the days of the Empire—Notable first editions—Fiskars cutlery—The breath of the sea—Sunlit waves—Fashionable Hangö—Open port all the year—Powerful ice breakers—Excursions by water—Rilaks Bay—A sea fight—Peter the Great of Russia—A first victory—Enjoyable moments—Hurried departure—Beyond the harbour—Last glimpse of Finland.

THE sunset as I left Fagervik was a thing to remember. It came gradually, at first a faint shimmer of palest rose, creeping behind the birch trees, and making their white trunks look like pink marble.

The splendid cornfields waiting to be garnered became seas of rose-coloured waters as the evening breeze dipped and crept through their quivering ranks. The rustle of the corn mingled with the evening song of the birds, and then died away in the peace of the surrounding woods.

When we reached the little station at Fagervik the sun had crept against the skyline into one huge ball of fire, which seemed to hold some menace in its flaming depths. Peace and war are never far apart in this strange and beautiful land.

In this brief description of some of the old homes of Finland, I must mention the historic Anjala, which

I had not the opportunity of visiting. This is the oldest feudal castle in Finland, and was given by Charles IX. of Sweden to Baron Henrik Wrede, as a reward for his gallantry in saving his life at the battle of Kerkholm in 1605.

It belonged to this noble family for two hundred and thirty years, when it was sold to the Government. In 1842 the Finnish nation presented this splendid estate as a mark of their esteem to the popular Governor-General then in office, Prince Menschikoff—a striking contrast to the relations of Finland and Russia at the present day.

The falls of Anjala and the surrounding river scenery are counted amongst the jewels of Finland. By an ancient feudal law, floating timber, which during the summer collects in large masses above the falls, is only allowed to be sent down the river on Sundays. The sight of the massed timber being separated and hurled down the steep waterfall is unique.

Anjala Castle is also supposed to be haunted. Ghosts are rarely to be met with in Finnish homes. This is all the more surprising when one considers that as recently as 1745, and even later, witch-trials took place in Finland, and many victims were publicly burnt.

In the early part of the eighteenth century a young student of the Åbo University was burnt alive for *pactum cum Satana*. The sole reason for this supposed compact with the devil was that he had learnt himself, and then taught some fellow-students, the intricacies of the Latin language in so short a time that he must have been aided by the powers of darkness.

In those days precocious youths who happened to know more than their preceptors were summarily dealt with. Nowadays the tables are turned, and we have more often to suffer for not knowing enough—at least, that was my own experience. The punishments I endured for lack of industry still smart in my mind. The devil certainly never aided my studies.

Darkness had descended over the landscape as the train drew up at the station of Billnäs. There is always something mysterious in arriving for the first time at a place in the dark. In this case it was augmented by the thunderous sound of the cataract, which provides the motive power to the many manufactories of Billnäs.

Billnäs ironworks were founded in 1641. At the present time they have risen to such a point of prosperity under the able guidance of Baron F. H. Hisinger, the owner of the Billnäs works, that he was obliged in 1898 to form it into a company, reserving for himself the largest number of shares, and still remaining as active chief of the immense business.

The Billnäs works passed into the hands of the Hisinger family in 1723, from which date they have slowly developed into their present high standard of excellence. However, it is solely owing to the energy of their present chief that the astonishing rise of Billnäs has taken place. He founded the first manufactory in Finland for making agricultural implements on the American system, as well as heavier tools for mines, railways, and all engineering purposes.

The steel used in their manufacture is of the highest quality obtainable. They were almost

exclusively used by the Russian army during the late Russo-Japanese War. Not only in Finland, but all over Russia, including Siberia and Manchuria, the Billnäs implements are sought after, and enormous quantities are exported annually.

That the Billnäs works are flourishing can be judged from the fact that the present output exceeds three million Finnish marks yearly.

The workpeople are also more favoured than elsewhere. The youngest apprentice is paid three hundred marks a year (£12), while the first-class mechanics can earn as much as two thousand marks (£80) yearly. Such wages are considered in Finland exceedingly high.

These fortunate people have also model houses to live in, with a piece of land apportioned to each family. Emergency funds are available in the case of sickness or accident, and there are luxuriously fitted bath establishments with hot and cold water, hospital and infirmary, reading-rooms and library.

Amongst the many benefits showered upon them by their generous chief are a school, divided into four classes, with two resident teachers, and a music club under the direction of a first-class master. These were added to recently by the opening of a large public garden for their use. The total number of employees is now sixteen hundred hands.

Gardening is the special hobby of this energetic baron. On his own private estate he has built a residence and training-school for gardeners. The house can accommodate eighteen pupils, and the course extends for two years.

I was much gratified in making the acquaintance

of this remarkable man. In appearance, Baron F. Hisinger is a typical aristocrat of the old school, and he is endowed with a charming personality. The hospitality of his delightful home will linger long in my memory.

The father of my host, who is himself a bachelor, was in his time the biggest landowner in Finland, possessing no less than a hundred and five estates. On his death this great property was divided between his three sons, the two eldest receiving Fagervik and Billnäs in their share.

August was waning fast during these last few days of my summer tour in Finland, and yet, if it had not been for the almanack, it would have been easy to imagine the summer back in its prime. It was a glorious morning when I left Billnäs, and the vegetation looked as green and fresh as in June. I regretted that I was not beginning my journey instead of finishing it. On leaving Billnäs the train passes through the new district recently sprung up with the opening of the branch line between Åbo and Helsingfors, which has made the capital three hours closer than it was formerly.

The new Karis line skirts some of the oldest villages in Finland—amongst them Salo, famed for its three churches. From the railway station a good view can be obtained of one of the churches built according to Finnish ideas in close proximity to each other. Tradition says they were erected as a peace-offering for a guilty conscience by a knight of the noble family of Horn, who used to live in the ancient castle of Wuorentaka, in the neighbourhood of Salo.

The story relates that the knight became

enamoured of his wife's maid, and plotted with her to encompass the ruin of his wife. One day, in the absence of her master, the maid enticed her mistress to go up on the loft of a stable, where she had previously sent a good-looking stable groom. Immediately her mistress entered into the trap she locked the door on the couple. Shortly afterwards the knight returned, and was shown by the unscrupulous maid the place where his wife was having a rendezvous with his groom. He affected intense anger, and as a punishment for the "guilty pair," he ordered the stable to be set on fire, and the innocent victims were burnt alive.

The kinsman of the unfortunate lady took another view of the subject and represented the enormity of the crime to the Pope, who condemned the knight to make a pilgrimage on his knees, and at every point where he was obliged by physical fatigue to rest he was to build a church. That the knight was quickly fatigued is attested to-day by the old churches that mark his enforced pilgrimage.

Not far from Wuorentaka is the beautiful seat of Åminne, the ancestral home of the Counts of Årmfelt. Count Carl Årmfelt, the present owner of this historic place, had asked me on my way to Hangö to stay the night at Åminne—a pleasure I was only too glad to avail myself of.

Åminne is a charming old home, with a wealth of family portraits and precious heirlooms in its stately rooms.

This historical seat was founded in 1353 by Olaf Sigmundson, from whose hands it passed into the possession of Count Horn and his descendants. For

centuries the Count Horns of Åminne were amongst the most prominent men who have made the history of Finland. Upon the extinction of this gallant line, Åminne was bought, in 1787, by Count Armfelt, great-great-grandfather of the present owner.

Åminne, as it stands to-day, is largely the work of the well-known Count Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt, favourite of Gustaf III., King of Sweden. This famous courtier was reputed the handsomest and most gallant man of his time. The innumerable portraits of him that hang upon the walls of Åminne testify to the truth of his undoubted personal charms. His descendants have inherited his good looks. An English ancestress also brought them a share of the family beauty. This was the lovely Sarah Cuthbert, who first married a Colonel Brook, and after his death a Baron Klinckowström, kinsman of the Armfelts of Åminne.

An exquisite portrait of her by Angelica Kauffman hangs in one of the smaller drawing-rooms, and lights up the room with its lifelike beauty. The picture shows the lady in a white satin gown with a mantle of softest mauve, half revealing the graceful curves of her swan-like neck and shoulders. Her hair is dressed in Empire style, bound with a green laurel wreath.

There are many stately beauties upon the walls of Åminne, but I think I should give the palm to the lovely Sarah Cuthbert.

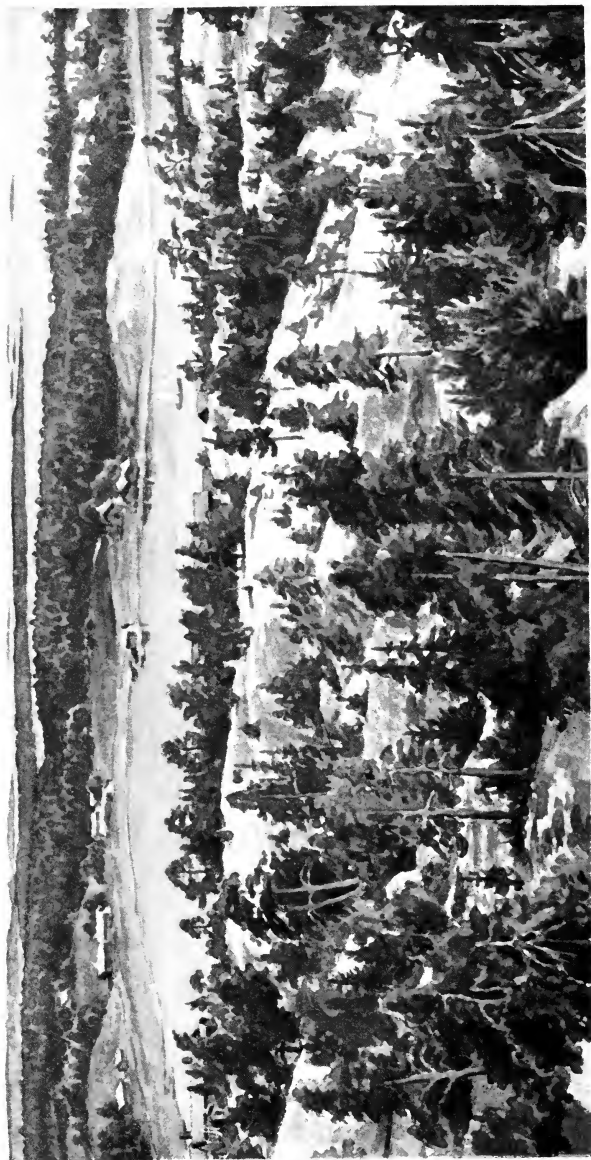
Amongst the other portraits of note is a magnificent painting of Count Carl Gustafson Armfelt, a distinguished soldier, who commanded the Finnish troops under Charles XII. of Sweden. He was

married to Lovisa Aminoff, by whom he had fifteen sons and three daughters. A family to be proud of!

The room I admired the most was the library, which has not been touched since Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt had it redecorated in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is purely Empire in treatment and is a gem of that period. The walls are panelled in rich red mahogany, with bold bronze decorations in Empire designs. The books are hidden behind the panelling, which opens with a key concealed in the strings of the bronze lyres that form the locks. The furniture is also of mahogany and ormolu, upholstered in yellow leather.

The most striking piece is a gigantic writing-table, measuring twelve feet in length, with six massive supports gorgeously decorated to correspond with the rest of the room. The only picture is a fine portrait of Gustaf III. of Sweden, inset in the wall, and a bust in bronze of the same monarch by Sergel, one of the best-known sculptors of the eighteenth century. The library contains some notable first editions, and there is also a valuable collection of old engravings, which comprises some fine examples of the early English engravers, including V. Green. Also a complete series of P. Wouverman's copper etchings.

But the treasures of Åminne are not all within doors. At least, that was the opinion of my host, who prides himself on having the finest stud of horses in Finland. The stables of Åminne are palatial, and are fit quarters for the splendid animals they contain. They have all been bred on the estate. The park is very extensive and well planned, with



HANGÖ FJORD

the usual eighteenth-century Greek temples and glorified summer-houses that no self-respecting park in Finland can exist without.

My last morning in Finland opened clear and bright, and I had to be early astir to catch the first train to Hangö. My kind host and his gracious wife were good enough to come and see me off at the station. The air was fresher than it had been, and the first imperceptible touch of frost had painted the bracken with shades of gold, and had given a tinge of red to the foliage. The old mansion of Åminne looked particularly fine in the autumnal aspect.

There are few places of importance before Hangö is reached. A short halt was made at the station of Fiskars—a small village which aspires to being the Sheffield of Finland, and where cutlery of the highest quality is manufactured. Fiskars works are amongst the oldest in the country. They were founded by J. Thorsten in 1649. The family owned it until 1752, when they sold it to Messrs. C. and W. Tottie, of Stockholm. They again resold it into the hands of Mr. John Julin, to whom the present flourishing business is largely due.

A breath of the sea was felt some time before we reached our destination, and the sound of the waves born far beyond the boundaries of Finnish waters were distinctly heard as the train pulled up at the harbour station of Hangö.

The large harbour was in the full bustle of summer work, and numerous steamers and sailing-boats lined the broad quays. The sea, beyond the confines of the harbour, was covered with millions

of white-tipped waves that crept in between the great sea walls in rollicking fashion. Those sunlit waves were so joyous that it would have been impossible to feel downcast in their presence. The smell of the strong salt air was as exhilarating as champagne. My spirits had been a little downcast at the thought of the approaching end of my holiday, but they went up like quicksilver in that fresh atmosphere.

Perhaps, hidden away somewhere in the back of my brain, there was a thought of a particularly cosy armchair in a club in Piccadilly.

The broad sides of the *Arcturus*, with her numerous portholes gleaming in the sunshine, looked home-like and comfortable. Some passengers were already on board, and were leaning over the bulwarks, as is the custom all the world over, intently looking ashore. The smallest thing on *terra firma* becomes interesting when seen from a ship. Under such conditions only lovers in the most advanced stage of their malady will turn their faces towards the sea. Love-making at sea is the most agreeable relaxation I know of, and the only thing to make a journey pass quickly.

One of the crew recognized me as I was making my way towards the gangway, and informed me that it would be a good two hours before she would be ready to start, owing to the extra large cargo of butter that was being shipped for Copenhagen and Hull. Hangö is the principal base in Finland for collecting and exporting butter. Thousands of barrels are exported weekly, and butter-making is the staple industry of the many country estates in the neighbourhood.

I determined to make the best of the unexpected two hours thus placed at my disposal, so, without loss of time, I jumped into a cab, and told the driver to take me to the Casino, which is the centre of the fashionable end of Hangö.

Hangö is a summer resort, and increases in popularity every year with the many visitors who come there to enjoy the sea-bathing and the health-giving scent of the pine forests that surround it. Hotels and villas that can be hired for the season are a distinctive feature of this pleasant summer watering-place. It has for many years been a favourite spot with Russians, who come in large numbers from St. Petersburg and the Baltic provinces.

The season was already waning, and the usually crowded restaurant of the Casino was comparatively empty. From there the view of Hangö Bay and the open sea beyond is glorious. On a stormy day the spray of the great waves that hurl themselves against the outer ridge of granite cliffs that guard the entrance of the bay can be seen some miles off.

The town and port of Hangö is of quite recent growth, and was founded in 1878 owing to the impetus of trade in all parts of the country, that had until then no exit during the winter months.

The possibilities of making Hangö an open port all the year round were then considered. The success of the undertaking was from the first assured, and has helped in no short measure towards the commercial development and prosperity of Finland.

The two formidable-looking steamers, the *Sampo*

and *Murtaja*, are the most powerful ice-breakers that exist, and make it possible, even during the most strenuous winters, to cut a furrow through the ice, to enable the shipping to pass to and fro. The ice is sometimes over five feet in thickness, and can easily bear a train on its surface. So the strength required of the ice-breakers is no small affair.

The Finnish mail-boats have a regular weekly service all the year round from Hull to Hangö. During the season of open water they touch the port of Helsingfors on their homeward journey, but invariably commence their outward trip from Hangö.

One of the chief amusements during the summer season at Hangö is sailing, and the numerous sailing craft to be seen adds to the picturesque aspect of the Hangö waters.

A delightful excursion by water can be made from Hangö to Rilaks, the well-known country-seat of the Counts Aminoff. Rilaks estate and mansion have been in the Aminoff family in a direct line for over three hundred years. The picture gallery of Rilaks is considered to be the finest private collection in Finland. This summer (1907) Rilaks was visited by the Emperor and Empress of Russia when their yacht the *Standart* went aground in close proximity to the place.

The Rilaks fjord was the scene of a memorable sea-fight during the war between Russia and Sweden, which took place there on July 26, 1714.

Part of the Swedish fleet under the command of a Finn, Nils Ehrenskjöld, were taken by surprise by the enemy. The Swedish strength numbered only nine hundred men and thirty-eight guns, while the

Russians had twenty thousand men and three hundred guns, under the command of Admiral Apraxin.

The Finnish commander refused to surrender, and kept this overwhelming force at bay for over three hours, when he and the remainder of his gallant crews were taken prisoners.

The Czar Peter was on board the flagship *Elefanten*, and witnessed the fight. He was himself a brave man, and was so delighted with the audacity of the young Finn, that after the battle he returned to Ehrenskjöld his freedom, besides many other marks of his esteem. This was the first victory of the newly constructed Russian fleet, and in memory of the fight a grey marble cross has been erected on a rock in the Rilaks fjord.

My two hours passed by all too quickly. It was difficult to measure time seated in the depths of a comfortable wicker beehive chair placed so close to the water's edge that, by leaning forward, I could have touched it with my hand. In the distance the sound of music from the Hotel Belle Vue, accompanied the murmur of the waves as they lapped the silvery sand of the beach. Close by, a large group of similar beehive chairs were filled with a gay company of young men and women, who were chatting and laughing merrily. So many distractions made me reluctant to return to the steamer. The steam of the *Arcturus* was well up, and the captain was already on his bridge giving the orders for the removal of the gangway when I dashed up, only just in time to be saved from the ignominy of being left behind.

Finland was in its most delectable mood as we

steamed slowly out of the harbour. The colouring of the water and the sky was indescribable, and the green, wooded shores were already touched in places with the lavish colours of autumn.

Once beyond the harbour, the open sea in all its strength caught the bows of our steamer, and made her plunge forward as if to bow homage to its might. Then she steamed right ahead towards the bank of grey clouds on the far horizon. The motion was scarcely felt, and only the sound of her powerful screws showed the speed at which she was cutting through the water.

The shores of the "Lost Daughter of the Sea" grew minute by minute fainter, and the waters became wider and colder. Most of the passengers had long since gone below, but I remained still on the deck, and watched those receding shores. The sinking sun was shrouding them in a veil of crimson light.

Behind that veil I saw once more the sun-steeped lakes and forests that I had seen during my summer holiday.

Finland is very young and very old. "Progress" is now her battle-cry. But in her heart the deeds of her forefathers are still remembered—pioneers of a race of honest men and brave women.

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Renewals and Recharges may be made 4 days prior to the due date.
Books may be renewed by calling 642-3405.

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
Berkeley, California 94720-6000

