



Finnish Fairy Tales

Parker Fillmore

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The spirit of nationalism that swept over the small peoples of Europe in the early nineteenth century touched faraway Finland and started the Finns on the quest of the Finnish. There as elsewhere scholars who were also patriots found that the native tongue, lost to the educated and the well-to-do, had been preserved in the songs and stories which were current among the peasants. Elias Lönnrot spent a long and busy life collecting those ancient runos from which he succeeded in building up a national epic, the Kalevala. This is Lönnrot's great contribution to his own country and to the world. Beside the material for the Kalevala Lönnrot made important collections of lyrics, proverbs, and stories.

During his time and since other patriot scholars have made faithful records of the songs and tales which the old Finnish minstrels, the runolaulajat, chanted to the strains of the kantele. The mass of such material now gathered together in the archives of the Society of Finnish Literature at Helsingfors is imposing in bulk and of great importance to the student of comparative folklore.

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