

**THE "UNKNOWN"
LIBRARY.
SQUIRE HELLMAN
AND OTHER STORIES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649711123

The "Unknown" Library. Squire Hellman and Other Stories by Juhani Aho

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JUHANI AHO

**THE "UNKNOWN"
LIBRARY.
SQUIRE HELLMAN
AND OTHER STORIES**

THE "UNKNOWN" LIBRARY

SQUIRE HELLMAN

AND OTHER STORIES

BY
"JUHANI AHO"



NEW YORK
CASSELL PUBLISHING COMPANY
104 & 106 FOURTH AVENUE X

2. C. C.
c 1873

Em

NEW-YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY



INTRODUCTION.

THE FINNISH NOVEL.

THE Finnish novel may be called the baby of the great Romance Family. Thirty years * ago it was unborn, but, from the very first hour of its birth, it displayed an astonishing vitality, and shot up so swiftly in every direction as to leave very little room in the native literature for anything else. It is true that we do find a few somewhat second-rate lyric poets among the modern native writers, while Minna Canth has shown that the language of the Kalevala can even

* I do not forget Gummerus and Kivi; but they can scarcely be taken seriously as romance writers. They were, rather, pioneers, who cleared the way for a later generation. The Finnish novel really begins with Päivrinta.

lend itself to the requirements of the modern drama ; but, taken as a whole, the Finnish literature is a literature of novels. That this literature has hitherto entirely escaped the notice of foreign scholars is scarcely surprising, when one considers the comparative isolation of the Finnish people, and the superlative difficulty of the Finnish language ; but that it will become known, one day, may be fairly assumed, in an age so greedy of discoveries and so curious of novelties as our own. In the meantime, a brief description of this out-of-the-way corner of the Republic of Letters may, perhaps, serve as an introduction to the *first* English translation of a Finnish novel.

The most characteristic and original of the Finnish novelists is Pietari Päävärinta. Born in 1827, of parents so poor that they were frequently forced to send out their children to beg bread for the starving family, he followed the plow till comparatively late in life, when an accident laid him, for a time, on a bed of sickness. From his boyish days he had always hungered after knowledge, and devoured, in his rare moments of leisure, such books as fell in his way, and he now employed his enforced leisure in writing a description of his own simple, but bitter experiences, en-

titled "Elämäni" (My life). This little sketch (it consists of but sixty-two pages) was, in 1876, published by the National Finnish Educational Society, and met with a success which justified the author in quitting agriculture for literature. He now began that long series of novels and sketches which have made his name so famous in his native land, and of which the following are the most notable: "Elämän havainnoita" (Reflections from life); "Minä ja muut" (Myself and others); "Uudistalo" (The new settlement); "Halla aamuna" (A frosty morning); "Vaimoni" (My wife); "Tahdon voima" (The power of the will), the two latter being especially beautiful and pathetic stories. Päivärinta is the chronicler *par excellence* of Finnish peasant life; but his method, though simple, is peculiar. He is, perhaps, best described as a religious realist. He excels in analysis of character, and his analysis is minute and searching, flinching from no detail which can give point or finish to his narrative. He describes the drunkenness and other vices of the peasantry with a vividness born of actual experience; but a moral, a religious purpose lies at the bottom of all his realism. A pietist himself, his belief in the authority of religion, the warnings

of conscience, and the radical distinction between right and wrong are unshakable, and some of his finest tales are those in which the human soul is shown struggling in the grip of some tyrannous vice from which it escapes indeed, but never scathless. Two other most amiable characteristics of Päivärinta are his intense fellow-feeling for the neglected and the oppressed, and a subtle appreciation of all that is best and noblest in womankind. In his longer and later works, however, his moralizing is excessive, his characters sometimes sink to the level of idealized abstractions, and his most wholesome reflections would frequently be none the worse for a little humorous seasoning.

Next to Päivärinta, decidedly the most original of the Finnish novelists, is Juho Reijonen, also a man of the people, and parish priest in his native place; but while the sexton* is never so great as when he is serious, the parson is nothing, if not gay. Reijonen, in fact, is a genial optimist, who takes life good-naturedly, and looks upon the world with an indulgent eye. His shorter stories, such, for instance, as 'Synkeän Matin juttu' (The tale of gloomy Matthew),

*Päivärinta was, for a long time, sexton in his native place.

in his "Uusia Kertoelmia" (Later sketches), are exquisite miniatures, drawn with characteristically Finnish elaboration of detail, and bubbling over with the sweetest, sunniest humor. He is less successful with the novel or romance, his more ambitious efforts—*e. g.*, "Vaihdokas" (The changeling); "Tuuli vaaralaiset" (In stress of weather), etc.—though not without talent, being full of improbabilities and extravagances, and showing both a want of constructive skill and a feebleness of characterization. In his studies of child-life, however, Reijonen is almost unsurpassable, falling not very far short, in this respect, of Hans Christian Andersen himself.

The study of child-life, however, seems to be a specialty of the Finnish novelists, and the literature abounds with beautiful little tales of this kind. Thus, to take only a couple of instances, Kauppi-Heikki in "Aiden Kuoltua" (After mother's death) has written a comically pathetic sketch of how Spinning Peggy foretells, from the cards, the fate of a little girl who has just been left motherless, the child herself being the narrator; while Lissa Tervo, a laborer's wife, describes in "Uusi isä" (The new father), how a little fatherless girl hears that she has got

"a new papa," while on a visit to her aunt. All the way home the child's fancy conjures up visions of her old papa coming back to her from heaven in glorified raiment, only to find, at her journey's end, a hard, exacting stepfather, who speedily puts to flight her innocent illusions. This pretty little story rightly obtained a place of honor in the well-known (in Finland) collection of popular sketches, published by Söderström, and entitled "Syvistä reveistä" (From the lowest ranks).

Stories relating to religious and educational subjects seem to have an especial attraction for the rising school of Finnish novelists. The gifted lady who writes under the pseudonym of Kyösti gives a powerful description of the curious pietistic sect known as the Hihhuli, grounded on personal experience. Another puritan sect, called Körtillaiset,* is vigorously attacked, in a novel of rude power, extraordinarily rich in proverbs, entitled "Korpelan Tapani" (Our way of going on at Korpela). The author, Heikki Meriläinen, is a blacksmith of Korpela.

Prominent among the novelists with a purpose is Minna Canth, who made her *début* a short time ago as a popular dramatist of considerable

* *Lit.*, Shirt-walkers.