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REVIEW

John Abercromby

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REVIEW.

SUPERSTITIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE FINNS.

I. Those relating to Hunting and Trapping. (*Suomen kansan muinaisia taikoja*. I. *Metsästys taikoja*). Helsingfors, 1891, pp. 243.

MR. MATTI VARONEN, the editor of this collection, has with great skill and success grouped together in logical order, and classified under many headings, a perfect mine of folk-lore material. It contains 782 items, in as many sections, not including a considerable number of variants given in the Appendix. To each section is appended in a footnote the name of the collector, the place of collection, together with the age and sex of the narrator.

The variety of game in Finland is still very considerable, and includes the bear, reindeer, stag, wolf, lynx, fox, otter, martin, hare, and squirrel, not to mention birds of various kinds. But to be a successful hunter or trapper many precautions are necessary. The guardian spirits of the forest must be propitiated, though this may be less necessary if the hunter, like Esau, is a hairy man from his birth, for that always ensures success at the chase. His luck may be destroyed by the evil eye of another, though there are several ways of counteracting this malign influence, such as by bringing a litter of young foxes secretly into his house and feeding them in a dark place; or it may be injured through his own imprudence, by playing, for instance, with his daughters late at night. Much depends on having a good dog, but more on being the owner of a straight shooting gun. During the shooting season, to keep it in good condition, it should be given a vapour bath every Saturday. If it won't go off, the best

plan is to put breadcrumbs under the bullet when loading. The effect of putting in breadcrumbs over the ball is that the missile enters the body of the animal shot at for certain. A gun shoots straight if washed with the blood of a carrion-eating bird, or if rubbed with the fat of a corpse ; it kills dead if the inside of the barrel is smeared with snake-fat or mercurial ointment. A gun will kill if at the time of purchase it is rubbed thrice against the left leg, or if put into an ant-heap for the night, or if the muzzle is heated in a fire and then plunged into water. If it won't kill, the hunter must take off his coat, suspend it to a branch beside the gun, take three knives, and then slash at his coat in a towering passion. If a gun is washed inside and outside with water and the blood of the grossbeak, it not only kills well but remains unaffected by hostile spells. A gun is often spoilt for shooting by an enemy without his ever having seen it. For if the enemy, on hearing the hunter's shot, turns on his right heel with the words, " A snake into the gun, a lizard for a plug ! " the latter might shoot for ever so long without hitting till he had cleaned his gun. The same result would ensue were the enemy, on hearing the report of the gun, to fling himself upon the ground on his belly. The shooting powers of a gun are destroyed by putting down the barrel the fat of a spawning fish, or by mixing sugar with the powder, or by wiping it with the dirty frock of an old harlot. These powers, however, can be renewed by leaving the gun all night in the sheep-pen, or by digging a hole through an ant-heap and then passing through it thrice, gun in hand. If a gun has been so ruined by the evil eye that it won't kill, won't even go off, a snake should be induced to crawl down the barrel and act as a wad to the charge. The gun is then fired into the air. The worst of this treatment is that it usually bursts the gun. The hunter's chances of sport are injured if he mentions animals by their real names, and the animals themselves seem sometimes to take it amiss. Hence the lynx is termed euphuistically "the forest cat", lest it should

devour the sheep. The fox and hare are only spoken of as "game", and the latter during the hunting season must never be called "bad". It is unlucky to shoot the black woodpecker, and it is a bad omen should one be caught in a trap or a snare. So, too, to shoot a cuckoo, "the birds' priest", is to incur misfortune.

JOHN ABERCROMBY.

CORRESPONDENCE.

TOM-TIT-TOT.

To the Editor of FOLK-LORE.

SIR,—With regard to the note of Mr. W. F. Kirby in FOLK-LORE (vol. ii, p. 132), I would point out the following remark of E. Taylor to his translation of the Grimms' folk-tale, "Rumpelstitzchen" (which word he changed into "Rumpelstiltskin"): "We remember to have heard a similar story from Ireland, in which the song ran:

"Little does my Lady wot
That my name is Trit-a-Trot."

I drew attention to this remark of Taylor's so long ago as 1870, in my notes to p. 81 of Gonzenbach's *Sicilianische Märchen*, which Mr. E. Clodd appears to have overlooked.

REINHARD KÖHLER.

Weimar, March 14, 1891.