

# Northern Messenger

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## Finland and Its People.

(‘Cottager and Artisan.’)

The ‘Land of a Thousand Lakes,’ as Finland is poetically called by her loving sons, possesses charms of scenery second only in the north of Europe to those of Norway. The country is rather larger than England, Scotland, and Ireland together, but the inhabitants do not number more than three millions.

The interior is hilly, and, as its poetic name implies, contains a vast number of

on their own account. Alexander I. of Russia had to arrange separately with the Finnish Diet (Parliament) before the Estates swore allegiance to him as Grand Duke of Finland.

The Finns would not consent to become a mere part of Russia. Though in Russia the Czar rules as an absolute monarch, he does not do so in Finland.

When under the rule of Sweden, the Finns had a Diet composed of four Estates (nobles, clergy, burgesses, and peasantry), and the maintenance of this constitution, together

paring themselves with their Russian neighbors. There is scarcely a man or woman in that well-ordered country who cannot read the Bible.

An excellent system of education is zealously carried out under the superintendence of the Lutheran clergy, who do not admit to the Communion any person who cannot read and write.

Altogether, Finland is one of the most flourishing parts of the Russian dominions, and it is easy to understand the indignation aroused by the deliberate attempt to bring its peo-



OUTSIDE THE CHURCH—A SCENE IN FINLAND.

lakes and streams. Fertile plains are met with here and there, but, inland, the poor stony patches of soil afford but a scanty living to the peasantry, who form by far the greater part of the population.

Along the coasts the people are more thriving, for the sea gives them very profitable occupation.

The newspapers for the past year or two have contained a good deal about Finland, and it may be interesting to see what some of the trouble has been about.

Though Finland now belongs to Russia, it did not always do so. Up to the year 1809 it was subject to Sweden, but in that year the latter country ceded her rights over the country to Russia.

The Finns were not, however, transferred from one Power to the other without a word

with the Lutheran religion and all other rights and privileges, was solemnly assured in a Charter of Rights.

Thus the Finns have managed their own home affairs, paying nothing until quite recently to the Imperial exchequer; have used a distinct coinage which made them independent of the changing values of Russian money; and have had a much better system of taxation of imports and exports, calculated to promote trade instead of hindering it.

Timber, tar, and dairy produce are the principal exports, and they are carried chiefly by the national merchant navy, which gives employment to more than twelve thousand men.

In regard to religion and education, the Finns have reason to be proud when com-

ple under the iron heel of the Russian nobles, who are responsible for so much of the disgrace and misery of their own nation.

This indignation at last led to the murder of the Russian governor, Bobrikoff, who had been sent to rule in defiance of the wishes of the people.

Had the Finns been justly governed, with due regard to their rights, they would have been a source of strength to the Russian Empire, and a model for other portions of it. An unjust rule has, however, turned them into more or less open enemies.

In fact, the whole of Russia's dealings with the country during the past few years show very vividly the folly of neglecting the advice of Him who spake as never man spake:—

‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’