



The Kalevala or Poems of the Kaleva District

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Again and again the Kalevala has been described as the national heroic epic of the Finnish people, a description which, at least outside Finland, has tended to do the work a certain disservice by raising expectations that the reader is not likely to find fulfilled, regardless of what else he may find that is richly rewarding at a poetical, folkloristic, or ethnographic level.... It is essentially a conflation and concatenation of a considerable number and variety of traditional songs, narrative, lyrics, and magic, sung by unlettered singers, male and female, living to a great extent in northern Karelia in the general vicinity of Archangel. These songs were collected in the field and ultimately edited into a book by Elias Lönnrot, M.D. (1802-1884), in two stages. The first version appeared in 1835 and is now known as the Old Kalevala ; it contained about half the material in the 1849 edition here translated.

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