

How Smaland and Schonen Came To Be

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Swedish

Intermediate
2 min read

The Smalanders declare:

At the time when our Lord created the earth, he made a level and fruitful stretch of land, and that was Schonen. But the devil had been busy in the meantime, and had created Smaland, a barren region consisting mainly of hills and swamps. When our Lord saw it, it looked very hopeless to him, and he strewed the bits of earth that remained in his apron out over it, and created the Smalanders. They turned out to be a fine race of men, handsome and strong and able to take care of themselves in any situation. It is said to this very day, that if you take a Smalander and set him down on a rock in the sea, he will still manage to save himself. But in the meantime the devil had been down in Schonen, and had created the people who live there, and that is why they are so slow, boastful and servile. But the people of Schonen say:

Once as our Lord and St. Peter were walking together, they heard a terrible commotion in a forest. "Go see what is happening there," said our Lord. St. Peter went. And there was the devil and a Smalander, who were pummeling each other with might and main. St. Peter tried to separate them; but they paid no attention to him. So he took his sword and chopped off both their heads. And he told our Lord what he had seen and done:

“No, that was not well done,” the latter replied, “go and put back their heads where they were, and touch the wounds with your sword, and both will come to life again.” St. Peter did so, but he exchanged heads. Since that time the Smalanders all have a bit of the devil about them, and those who know the devil, will tell you that he is more or less like the Smalanders.

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