

EDITORIAL

We are pleased to present to our readers this latest theme issue, entitled *Poverty of a Beggar and a Nobleman: Experiencing and Encountering Impoverishment in Nineteenth-Century Finland*. The guest editors, Pirita Frigren and Tiina Hemminki from the University of Jyväskylä, have compiled a fascinating collection of articles about poverty in Finland during the 1800s. The contributors to this volume approach the topic from a number of different perspectives, showing how poverty in nineteenth-century Finland could afflict anyone, regardless of social status—from the landless poor to the merchant and the aristocrat. The authors weave together stories of individual tragedies caused by unfortunate circumstances: the Great Famine, the death of a caregiver, the birth of an unwanted child, business failure, or the Great Fire of Turku. We also learn about tax exemptions, petitions to the tsar, and other options and hopes for survival in dire situations. We learn about the Ahrenberg siblings, who were fortunate enough to be able to work their way out of poverty, and we read about members of the bourgeois who plunged into it.

Most importantly, these articles tell us about a society without a reliable safety network—of mothers and fathers who frantically kill their children because they cannot feed them, servants who steal in order to survive through tomorrow. But we also learn about incredible resilience.

The chapters are thoroughly researched and well presented, with meticulous archival work backing up the facts and individual histories. Professor Antti Häkkinen from the University of Helsinki has written the afterword. We recommend this collection warmly to anyone interested in the life of nineteenth-century Finland, a place that many left—because of poverty. If your ancestors lived in that world, you will possibly learn about their Finland, their lives, and their struggles. Reading through the chapters, I felt I was getting in touch with my own great-great-grandparents, people who saw the world of which *Poverty of a Beggar and a Nobleman* tells. They knew a life without health insurance, school lunches,

investment funds, summer vacations, social security, meals-on-wheels, retirement savings, and burial accounts. Our great-great-grandfathers must have known the desperation when summer frost descended on the fields and killed the harvest. Our great-great-grandmothers may have added pine bark into their dough. The chapters here make us appreciate what we have. May they also inspire us to work for a world where no child, woman, or man has to worry about where the next meal will come from.

Helena Halmari