

‘Not So Barren or Uncultivated’

BRITISH TRAVELLERS IN FINLAND
1760–1830

Tony Lurcock

‘He then directed his course for Abo in Finland, where there is nothing that pleased him in the survey, or can amuse by the description . . . He found the province of Finland, however, not so barren or uncultivated as he had been taught to expect.’

Critical Review (1775)



Arrival in Turku, nineteenth century

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Front cover: *Viewing the Midnight Sun. TORNAO IN LAPLAND.*
Engraving by Thomas Bewick; frontispiece of Matthew Consett's *A Tour
through Sweden, Swedish Lapland, Finland and Denmark*, 1789.

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Any comments, corrections or additions would be welcomed by the author at 9 Monmouth Road, Oxford OX1 4TD, UK, or by email to tonylurcock@yahoo.com.



Place Names in Swedish and Finnish

(Archaic Swedish spellings are in parentheses.)

Björneborg	Pori
Borgå (Bergo)	Porvoo
Brahestad	Raahe
Elsing (Helsing)	Helsinki (village)
Enontekis	Enontekiö
Fredrikshamn	Hamina
Gamla Karleby	Kokkola
Helsingfors	Helsinki
Lovisa (Louisa)	Loviisa
Ny Karleby	Uusikaarlepyy
Nyslott	Savonlinna
Peterlax	Pyterlahti
Pyttis	Pyhtää
Sibho	Sibbo
Sveaborg	Suomenlinna
Tammerfors (Tamerfers)	Tampere
Tourneå	Tornio
Uleåborg	Oulu
Vasa	Vaasa
Åbo	Turku
Övertourneå	Ylitornio

Preface

This book has its origins in occasional talks given to Finnish-British Societies in various towns in Finland some forty years ago. They were readings rather than lectures, and offered striking and amusing extracts from books by British travellers in Finland. Over the years I have found many more books, and discovered a good deal about many of the writers.

Viewed chronologically these accounts arrange themselves in a developing pattern. In the eighteenth century Finland was a destination almost exclusively for those who were rich and titled, as well as bold and adventurous. With the coming of the steamboats, first on the Baltic, and later from England, sightseers from a different class of society appeared, and by the end of the nineteenth century ladies as well as gentlemen were taking leisurely tours of Finland, especially in the lake district. The twentieth century saw visitors of all classes travelling to Finland, often interested in the politics and social institutions of this new republic, and attracted also because it was unbelievably cheap. The present volume covers the earliest part of this history, from the 1760s to the 1830s.

All of the books which are discussed and cited are by English or Scottish authors, and were published in Britain. The book has two limitations: I have made no attempt to compare British travellers with, for example, those from Germany or France, nor have I (with one exception) made use of or sought out unpublished material. The presentation is broadly chronological, but I have put a few writers a little

out of sequence where I have felt that this would make the book more cohesive.

The book is first and foremost an anthology. The extracts are chosen from a score or more of accounts, with a short introduction to each writer. I have attempted to make the book more than a chronology by linking some of the recurrent features, ranging from the writers' often rudimentary ethnological instincts to their opinions of the roads and post-houses. There is not always a great deal of consensus: every traveller tells his own tale. It is amusing rather than bewildering to find, for example, how some of them considered that crossing from Finland to Russia was to move from civilisation to savagery, while others held the opposite opinion.

In the Introduction I have presented the writers against the background of their times, describing some of the cultural, social and literary ideas which they reflect. Themes such as 'the picturesque' can then be mentioned in the body of the book without further digression. It is by no means necessary to read the introduction to enjoy the contents of the book, nor need the book be read chronologically, in full, or indeed at all. That is the way with anthologies.

The earliest accounts of Finland often confuse the races: Swedes, Finns and 'Lapps'. In particular travellers in Lapland did not usually distinguish Finns living in Lapland from what are now known as Sami, the native inhabitants. The term *Finlander* is commonly used where we should now say Finn, but Swedish-speaking Finns, confusingly for modern readers, are often referred to as 'Swedes'.

Several writers describe their journeys west of St Petersburg as passing 'through Russian Finland'. This phrase, like references to 'the Governor of Russian Finland', is a reminder that the map of Finland has for two and a half centuries

been periodically redrawn. The eastern border had been moved west by the Peace of Turku in 1743; the Kymijoki, with its famous bridge, marked the border between what travellers usually termed Swedish Finland and Russian Finland, and Hamina became the Russian garrison town. This border remained until Russia occupied Finland in 1808–9; by the Treaty of Hamina (1809) all of Finland was ceded by Sweden to Russia. Finland was not incorporated into Russia, but became an autonomous Grand Duchy, keeping the constitution and legal system from the Swedish era. At the Diet of Porvoo (1809) the Czar undertook to uphold the Lutheran faith and 'the constitutional laws and rights' of Finland; Finns swore allegiance to the Czar. Finnish Karelia and the province of Vyborg (Viipuri in Finnish) were now part of the Grand Duchy, and travellers did not reach Russia proper until they were almost in sight of St Petersburg. This border remained until the Second World War. For travellers, as for most inhabitants, these changes of sovereignty had little effect at this time; they are mentioned here to make better sense of incidental allusions in the text, and to avoid confusion about where Finland's borders actually were.

The problems of place names are not so easily addressed. Firstly, travellers mention many places whose names bear no resemblance to anything that can be found on accessible maps of Finland. This may be because they are Swedish names which have long been replaced by Finnish ones, or because they are the writers' phonetic approximations to what they thought they heard; on occasion it could be both of these, presumably. In the quotations I have let the names stand as published, but in my own text I have given the modern, Finnish names to all places that I have identified; the others are indicated by quotation marks. A more troublesome matter has been that of Swedish and Finnish

place names. Almost without exception writers until the end of the nineteenth century used Swedish names: Helsingfors rather than Helsinki, Åbo rather than Turku, and Nyslott rather than Savonlinna. I don't think that there is any satisfactory way out of this difficulty, so I have adopted what seems to be the least unsatisfactory option: instead of pestering the text with a succession of alternative names, I have kept place names unaltered in the quoted passages – nearly always the Swedish version – and used the current Finnish names in my own text. Readers unfamiliar with the Swedish names may need to refer to the list of place names, but the context will usually make things clear.

I should mention too that I have kept the spelling of the original texts, and am fairly confident that all apparent misspellings are actually original. A few very obvious misprints and significant mistakes in punctuation have been silently corrected. Modern readers may be as amused at the English attempts to render Finnish place names, as English travellers a century later were by Finnish attempts to produce a restaurant menu in English.

The Appendix contains some material which would have clogged up the narrative, but which seemed to me worth preserving. The Notes are mostly page references for the quoted passages. I have avoided the distraction of footnotes, or numbers in the text to indicate notes. By these means I hope that the book will be readable as well as accurate.

The present book carries the story down only to the 1830s. Whether further volumes appear will have to depend on the reception of what follows. All that I will say now is that there is more where this came from.

Introduction

Anyone who contemplated travelling to Finland before the last years of the eighteenth century would have found little information beyond the final brief chapter of the *Germania* of the Latin historian Tacitus, written in AD 98. This is how it reads in John Aiken's translation from 1777:

The Fenni live in a state of amazing savageness and squalid poverty. They are destitute of arms, horses and settled abodes: their food is herbs; their cloathing, skins; their bed, the ground. Their only dependence is on their arrows, which, for want of iron, are headed with bone; and the chace is the support of the women as well as the men, who wander with them in the pursuit, and demand a share of the prey. Nor do they provide any other shelter for their infants from the wild beasts and storms, than a covering of branches twisted together. This is the resort of youth; this is the receptacle of old age.

This description, wrote John Thomas James in 1816, 'is often quoted in allusion to their present habits and character'. Many of the British travellers from the late eighteenth century who published accounts of their experiences in Finland felt that very little had changed in the intervening centuries. Writer after writer recorded discomfort, disgust, and disbelief. Edward Daniel Clarke, crossing from Vartsala to Turku in sub-Arctic temperatures in January 1800, wrote that his journey 'was one of extreme suffering; and perhaps few *English* travellers ever encountered one of greater trial'. 'Yet,' he continued, 'any thing was preferable to remaining in the

wretched and unwholesome hovel where we had passed the night.' Like many other early travellers, he found the horrors of the accommodation even worse than the rigours of the Finnish winter. Summer travelling was no less daunting: the bugs indoors and the mosquitoes outdoors caused more distress than the blood-curdling temperatures of winter. 'No one, but those who have suffered,' wrote John Carr, 'could believe them capable of producing so much torment.'

The early travellers found the inhabitants of Finland even less attractive than the country itself. 'Unpolished in their manners, and still retaining the vestiges of Gothic ignorance, they present not many charms to tempt the traveller,' observed Sir Nathaniel Wraxall. 'The manners of the people were so revolting,' wrote Clarke, 'that one hesitates in giving the description of anything so disgusting.' Sir Robert Ker Porter thought that 'their appearance is ten times more savage than the grimmest Russian I ever met', while Andrew Swinton added that 'the Finland women are extremely coarse in their persons and features'. The peasants spoke, in Wraxall's words, 'a barbarous jargon equally unintelligible to a Swede or a Russian'. In the whole country it was only the hardiness of the horses which regularly met with praise. Why, then, did these long-suffering travellers not stay at home, or at least confine their movements to the well-known resorts of 'civilised' Europe?

There were, in fact, all sorts of reasons which prompted British travellers from the mid-eighteenth century onwards to turn their horses' heads to the North. Wraxall was expressing a commonly held view when he wrote in 1775:

Mankind are become more sceptical, and refuse to be amused with superstitious legends, or the wanton sallies of a luxuriant and fertile imagination. The refinement and civilisation of modern manners, has rendered it no

difficult matter to inspect kingdoms and provinces, to which access was formerly barred by bigotry, barbarism, and want of all police.

'Fabulous' journeys were coming to be seen as a taste which belonged to an earlier age; it was now more likely to be an empirical urge which sent travellers on their way. Wraxall stressed that the world was now safe enough for people to go to remote countries to find things out for themselves. Arthur de Capell Brooke, who travelled to the North Cape in 1820, sought to correct the 'general notions' that northern Europe suffered 'almost continual darkness' and was mostly 'fast bound . . . in chains of ice':

A person . . . who can divest himself of those ideas, and meet with cheerfulness the many little inconveniences to which everyone who leaves his own country is liable, will find in the North much to gratify his curiosity, and interest his feelings.

Partly it was novelty which attracted travellers to the north of Europe, and which made their written accounts so popular. From about 1770, as Katherine Turner has shown, book reviewers were complaining that readers were bored with accounts of traditional European travel, and were anxious to read about fresh fields. Changing taste, too, played an important part. Richard Holmes has described this phenomenon:

Hitherto the English literary traveller (for the great part male, well-heeled and accompanied by guides, valets or tutors) had adhered to a well-defined circuit through Europe and the Levant that over three centuries had become known as the Grand Tour. 'The grand object of travel,' pronounced Dr Johnson, 'is to visit the shores of the Mediterranean . . .' The essential attraction was

towards the cities and civilizations of the south. To go north and east – beyond say the international port of Hamburg and the old walled and turreted medieval city of Lübeck, was to journey beyond the pale of Western culture. The shores of the distant Baltic, and the half-legendary lands of the midnight sun beyond, were *terra incognita* for all but a few hardy sailors, merchants, diplomats, and the new race of commercial travellers.

Few travellers in any of these four categories have left any account of their movements in Finland, at least in the period up to about 1830. The published travel books, with only a few exceptions, are by writers who fit Holmes's description of 'the English literary traveller', although it was more commonly the tutor who subsequently published an account. Most writers of this time published their travelogues in the form of a journal or a series of letters; written at the time, these could be easily worked up for publication, and even revisited for a later, expanded edition.

More than novelty was involved: there were sternly practical reasons for travellers to head north. The traditional routes of the Grand Tour were at this time repeatedly obstructed or rendered hazardous by the continental wars – by the French Revolution in 1789 and then, until the Battle of Waterloo in 1814, by Napoleon. 'The angry decrees of renovated war,' wrote Carr in 1805, had 'closed the gates of the south; the north alone lay expanded before me.' Throughout this period young men and their tutors were having to find new directions, and substitutes for the Grand Tour. One was Edinburgh, christened at this time 'the Athens of the North' because of the concentration of educated travellers who had temporarily settled there. Northern Europe was another popular alternative.

The very idea of the traditional Grand Tour, which had

become popular after the Restoration, was actually being questioned long before the time of Napoleon. Clarke, himself a Cambridge tutor, and the most significant traveller represented in this volume, called the Grand Tourists' bluff in uncompromising terms; addressing the young nobility of England, he wrote:

But, let me ask, have your continental expeditions been attended with that advantage, which it is natural to suppose would result from the lavish contribution, both of time and treasure, which has been exacted to complete them? A painful witness to the contrary, it is with deep concern I call to mind, the shameful manner in which they are frequently accomplished. Roaming about the Continent, in almost proverbial apathy, becomes your characteristic. For what purpose do you travel? Is it to associate promiscuously with adventurers? – to be immured in gaming houses? – to be seen all the morning at the billiard table; and all the evening intoxicated; or at the faro bank? – to become the object of contemptuous ridicule in every country you visit? Is it for this Albion pours forth her sons upon foreign ground; and in the vain hope of obtaining ornaments to her senate, honours to her state, understandings enlarged, prejudices corrected, and taste refined?

Few of these traditional dissipations of the English upper class were available in northern Europe, so even when the roads to the south were clear some travellers – and their tutors especially – could still find good reasons for heading north. The earliest traveller represented here, Joseph Marshall, explained how disappointment with his own Grand Tour through France, Italy, Spain and Germany in 1761 had influenced him to try something entirely different:

I soon found that I had spent much time, money and attention, in order to return home, judiciously speaking, as ignorant as I went out. Reflection convinced me, that there were numerous objects, highly deserving attention in each country, which I had passed by without notice; and I regretted a journey performed in the rawness of youth, which afforded me so little instruction.

Many of these early accounts of travel in Finland offer something more, and more important, than a simple change of direction. They imply, and at times express, views of travel which actively reject what Holmes describes as 'the old eighteenth-century idea of the Grand Tour as an extension of classical education and the reverential study of the masterpieces of antiquity'. Matthew Consett, in his own rather naive way, described such a feeling on his return from Lapland in 1786:

We have beheld human nature under her rudest appearances: we have seen her in a State very different from that which appears in cities or at Courts, and have been enabled to draw conclusions from the varieties of life.

Mary Wollstonecraft offered a more enlightened and empirical view of travel in *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796):

If travelling, as the completion of a liberal education, were to be adopted on rational grounds, the northern states ought to be visited before the more polished parts of Europe, to serve as the elements even of the knowledge of manners, only to be acquired by tracing the various shades in different countries.

She suggests here that knowledge of the primitive north should be a prelude to visiting the rest of Europe, so that

the traveller could, so to speak, trace the development and advance of civilisation. Clarke shared this view; '[a] view of mankind in their origin opens before me,' he wrote to his Cambridge friend William Otter as he prepared to leave Stockholm for Finland.

Consett was one of many travellers to Finland whose special interest was Lapland, an area where the attractions were as varied as they were legendary. The very name 'Lapland' held for eighteenth-century readers some of the mythological power that Siberia had in later ages, as a place of great remoteness, beyond the boundary of civilised life. There was more than this. The Laplanders had for centuries had a reputation throughout Europe for magical practices and sorcery. In Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* a bewildered character exclaims, 'Sure these are but imaginary wiles,/ And Lapland sorcerers inhabit here.' These activities had been described vividly by Joannes Scheffer in his *Lapponia* (1673), published in England as *History of Lapland* in 1674. Fuseli's famous painting *The Night-Hag visiting the Lapland Witches* is dated 1796, while he was an associate of the Royal Academy, and would have been exhibited in London. The magic drum, used as an aid to augury, had long been prohibited in Finland, but seemed to be still a living presence. Clarke wrote that 'the divining-drums, by which fortunes are told by sorcerers, are so well known . . . that it were superfluous to insert a description'. Hundreds of miles south, near the Baltic coast, Porter commented on the 'wild scenery' which was 'the very theatre in which a romance writer would place his supernatural visitants'. As late as 1818 John Keats makes reference to 'a Lapland witch'.

An attraction both more immediate and widespread than witchcraft was the vogue for Northern primitivism in the later eighteenth century. The 'Goths,' writes Barton, 'exercised

a growing fascination for the preromantic imagination . . . [T]hey seemed to embody primitive virility, vitality, valour, and hardihood, in contrast to the effete and degenerate Romans of the late Empire, heirs of an overrefined and dying civilisation.' Edward Gibbon had written that '[m]any vestiges attest the ancient residence of the *Goths* in the countries beyond the Baltic'. The literary dimension of the primitive is seen, for example, in the popularity of the Ossian poems, translated and published by James MacPherson in the early 1760s, and of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Literary primitivism was seen also in ballad poetry, which was popular long before Wordsworth and Coleridge published their *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Wordsworth wrote in 1800 of the 'elementary feelings' found among the rustic poor: he would have found them in abundance in Finland.

Many English readers knew something of Lapland from one of the most popular poems of the century, *The Seasons*, by the Scottish-born poet James Thomson. The passage describing Lapland was added in the edition of 1730.

Wide o'er the spacious regions of the north,
That see Boötes urge his tardy wain,
A boisterous race, by frosty Caurus pierced,
Who little pleasure know and fear no pain,
Prolific swarm. They once relumed the flame
Of lost mankind in polished slavery sunk;
Drove martial horde on horde, with dreadful sweep
Resistless rushing o'er the enfeebled south,
And gave the vanquished world another form.
Not such the sons of Lapland; wisely they
Despise the insensate barbarous trade of war;
They ask no more than simple Nature gives,
They love their mountains and enjoy their storms.
No false desires, no pride-created wants,

Disturb the peaceful current of their time,
And through the restless ever-tortured maze
Of pleasure or ambition bid it rage.

(The rest of Thomson's description is printed as Appendix 1.) So many of the travellers of this time actually quote from 'Winter' that it seems likely that it was influential in popularising Lapland.

Thomson's chief sources were Scheffer's *History of Lapland*, and Maupertuis's *Figure of the Earth*, published in English in 1738 (the author had been sent to Lapland by Louis XV to measure the length of a degree of the meridian). Thomson was fascinated by their descriptions of the Arctic nights, the fairy-land enchantments, the brightness of the stars, and hunting by the light of 'meteors' – a contemporary term for the Aurora Borealis. Joseph Addison often refers to Lapland in *The Spectator*; in two numbers from 1712 poetry from Lapland is introduced:

The following Verses are a Translation of a *Lapland* Love-Song, which I met with in *Scheffer's* History of that Country. I was agreeably surpriz'd to find a Spirit of Tenderness and Poetry in a region which I have never suspected for delicacy.

It seemed to the writer astonishing that lyrics 'not unworthy old *Greece* or *Rome*' should be produced in a climate so dark and cold that 'tis amazing that the poor Natives shou'd get food, or be tempted to propagate their Species'. (See Appendix 2 for the text of the poems.)

Such was the vogue for Lapland that Consett, arriving in Tornio in 1786, was told by a resident, Professor Helands, that 'many Englishmen had visited Tornao in his time, and [he] shewed us Letters he had received from persons of rank in London'. By the end of the century, writes Herbert Hartman,

'Lapland . . . was becoming an item (was Maupertuis to blame?) in the Romantics' paraphernalia of remoteness.' In English Augustan poetry Lapland became established as a place of unsullied and romantic isolation. Nowhere could be imagined as further from the dark satanic mills. Words alone could not do justice to these Finnish scenes; several of the writers embellished their accounts with engravings, and these were occasionally issued separately in portfolios.

In the dawn of the Romantic Movement it is hardly surprising to find travellers seeking new manifestations of the picturesque. The theory of the picturesque – 'views seen as being artistic but containing elements of wildness and irregularity' – was promoted by William Gilpin and Uvedale Price in the later eighteenth century. Wraxall was one of the travellers who rather self-consciously relished the picturesque, as in this summer vignette from the Åland Islands:

Many of the prospects were, however, so wondrously picturesque and romantic, that I frequently stopped the boatmen for a minute, to gaze upon the extraordinary scene around me.

In winter, too, there was much to appreciate: William Coxe, arriving in Finland in early February, enjoyed 'the picturesque appearance of the sledge team'. Clarke went far beyond a scientist's appraisal of the landscape, echoing Augustan poets like Thomson and Joseph Warton in praising the grandeur of the 'prospects'; the sketches which he made in Lapland, some of them later engraved, 'were always picturesque'.

Some of the travellers to northern Europe were surprised to find that they had discovered a race of people who seemed to be untouched by European civilisation. This was the very opposite of what was either sought or felt by travel-

lers to Italy and Greece. Thomson had perhaps prepared a way by idealising the Laplanders as a peace-loving people, perfectly in tune with nature. The Lapland passage in *The Seasons* reveals interests which go far beyond the picturesque: Thomson presents an aspect of primitivism which puts forward a progressivist view of history. The scenes he depicts are inhabited by virtuous primitives – noble savages, no less – who substantiated ideas developed by Voltaire and Rousseau. 'In his native Switzerland,' writes Barton, 'Rousseau found a new Arcadia, where a sturdy peasantry, uncorrupted by the evils of civilisation, lived simple and virtuous lives amid natural surroundings inspiring in their awesome grandeur.' Several British travellers found this new Arcadia in Lapland.

Curiosity about primitive civilisation is seen frequently in the following pages. John Bowring considered that no nation could have been more untouched than Finland:

The history of a people not very numerous, but very widely scattered, inhabiting a frigid and inhospitable climate, is in truth soon told, and the vicissitudes of sovereignty, the change of masters, affect this race of man almost as little as they affect the wolves, whose troops occupy their magnificent pine-tree forests, or the seals that play about the borders of the Bothnian Sea.

The primitiveness of the inhabitants of Lapland aroused the curiosity and caught the imagination of many travellers. Consett wrote:

Ignorant of all the improvements of Life, unknowing in the several embellishments of society, they live, in the interior parts of Lapland, as much as possible in a state of Nature.

Several travellers expressed their surprise at finding any signs of civilisation at all.

The State of Nature was a concept which greatly exercised some eighteenth-century thinkers. Samuel Johnson had travelled to the Hebrides in 1773, taking, as Mary Lascelles writes, 'the opportunity to observe living people still tracing a pattern of life elsewhere extinct, one which he had hitherto apprehended only through the historical imagination.' It was on this Scottish tour that Johnson and Boswell discussed taking a journey through the Baltic; Johnson felt, presumably, that further north this 'pattern of life' could be experienced in an even more unspoiled form. It was Boswell, not Johnson, who had a change of heart.

It was in Lapland, rather than around the Baltic, that such a way of life could best be viewed. Brooke quotes the opinion of Vaillant ('well known for his travels in Africa, and who has had favourable opportunities of observing man in the state of nature in which savages exist') that 'in an uncivilised state, man is naturally good'. Brooke describes an episode among the 'Finlanders' at Jarhois, south of Muonio, where three young men 'in a state of perfect nudity' from the sauna entered the room where he and his party were sitting and the women ('themselves very slightly attired') were spinning:

A stranger from far more civilised parts of the world than Finland is greatly surprised at finding the intercourse between the sexes so unconstrained and yet so innocent.

Episodes such as this caused several travellers of this era to consider, and even reassess, what the term 'civilised' implied. It was not only in the 'state of nature' that such behaviour was noted: Clarke devotes a whole page to describing how

a trusting merchant in Oulu discounted a large bill without any security – an instance of 'unmixed virtue'.

Combined with this idealisation of the people in Finland is a discomposing counter-movement of colourful denigration, already described; Clarke likened a Lapp to the 'long-lost link between man and ape'. '[A] curious ambivalence appears in their accounts,' writes Barton, 'showing the persistence of the concept of the "noble savage" even in the face of disagreeable realities.' Several of the writers in this volume, in the middle of harshly realistic descriptions of the weather and the accommodation, switch suddenly and disconcertingly into idealised descriptions of peasant households, which seem to owe nothing to observation and everything to English pastoral poetry.

There were many other reasons for travelling to Lapland; they were summarised energetically by Clarke (who probably originated the term 'literary traveller'):

What then are the objects, it may be asked, which would induce any literary traveller to venture upon a journey into *Lapland*? Many! That of beholding the face of Nature undisguised; of traversing a strange and almost untrodden territory; of pursuing inquiries which relate to the connexion and the origin of nations; of viewing man as he existed in a primæval state; of gratifying a taste for *Natural History*, by sight of rare *animals*, *plants*, and *minerals*; of contemplating the various phænomena caused by difference of *climate* and *latitude*: and, to sum up all, the delight which travelling itself affords, independently of any definite object; these are the inducements to such a journey.

Clarke's scientific interests were shared by many other travellers, and are reflected in their frequent references to

Linnaeus and Tycho Brahe. The upper-class Englishmen were, naturally, interested in shooting game and catching salmon, but many other interests, often unexpected, developed during their travels.

Almost all the British travellers attended 'divine service', as they invariably termed it, whenever they could, just as they would back home; it seems not to have concerned them at all that they did not understand a word. Towards the end of the period we find missionaries travelling to Finland with Bibles. It is possible that George Borrow was one of them, but if he was there is no record of the journey which he was contemplating in 1834. Robert Pinkerton left an account of his work in Finland for the British and Foreign Bible Society, while the fullest description is by the 'freelance' missionary John Paterson.

For visitors to Finnish Lapland the route was usually through Sweden, heading for Tornio, but the return journey was often via Ostrobothnia; only later in the nineteenth century did Norway sometimes become a starting point for Lapland. It was very unusual to combine a journey to Lapland with one to southern Finland. All the significant towns, from Tornio to Hamina, were coastal; with the exception of Kaajani there were no chartered towns in central Finland until after quite late in the eighteenth century, so the few travellers who did stray from the coastal routes were in unknown country. Most of those who visited southern Finland were passing through on the way to or from St Petersburg. The road through southern Finland, the Great Coastal Road, was one of three routes; the others were overland through the Baltic states, and the sea-passage straight up the Baltic to Kronstadt (considered by survivors as by far the most dangerous).

The passage between Stockholm and Turku, through the

Åland archipelago, is better documented than the route from Turku to St Petersburg, partly because it usually took longer; travellers on the second stage were never becalmed, or halted by dangerous ice. This journey across the Gulf of Bothnia often left the stronger impression, because of the idyllic scenery in summer or the dramatic dangers of crossing the ice in winter. There were two routes: the packet boats sailed between Stockholm and Turku, while the post route left Grisslehamn for the little village of 'Elsing' (now, confusingly, called Helsinki) about forty miles north of Turku, and usually a two-day journey. Nowadays the 'local' ferry route towards Grisslehamn sails from nearby Kustavi.

The packet boat was more direct, but became increasingly unreliable as winter set in; even in summer it made the traveller largely dependent upon the wind. The 'post route' was a species of island-hopping, with boats available just as horses were always ready at post houses. Although not so dependent on the wind, these travellers could find themselves at the mercy of the elements, and also of unscrupulous postmasters.

The Great Coastal Road, called also 'the great road' or 'The Vyborg Road', is better known now as The King's Road, although that name was not used by British writers. It 'was also known as the Summer Road since it was difficult to traverse in the spring and autumn because of water and broken or weak ice'. The King's Road had been the postal route from Turku to Vyborg since 1638, with post offices added along the route over the years at Karjaa, Helsinki, Porvoo, Loviisa, and Hamina. 'Between the post offices, peasant farmhouses were selected to be postal houses. The ideal situation was for postal houses to be 12–20 kilometres apart', this being the right distance for changing horses. This was

the route taken by nearly all the travellers at least until the 1830s. There were two 'ancillary routes', one via Hämeenlinna perhaps taken in part by Pinkerton, and another from Porkkala to Tallinn, which is not mentioned by any British travellers, although it would probably have got them to St Petersburg more quickly. It is worth mentioning here that no traveller from this era mentions using a map, or even comments on not having one.

In the descriptions of those taking this route there is much that is repetitive. After brief impressions of Turku, cursory remarks on the university, the cathedral and the observatory, travellers set off posting towards St Petersburg by way of Salo, Helsinki (with a tour of the fortress at Suomenlinna) and Loviisa. Usually it was their intention to get this part of the journey over as quickly as possible; Elliott, for example, covered the distance from Helsinki to Hamina in one day. For many travellers the limit of their interest was to comment on the carriages in summer or the sledges in winter, on the reliability of the posting system and horses, on the state of the roads and on the condition of the inns, but some of them did linger – not always by choice – and looked beyond their carriages.

Marshall, the earliest recorded traveller, crossed Finland on horseback, but almost all his successors either took their own carriage with them or acquired one en route. Carr paid ten guineas for his chariot to be taken from Harwich, while Clarke bought in Stockholm a huge, luxurious Viennese carriage – 'a monstrous porcupine' – for eighty pounds. Others bought in Turku or St Petersburg a calèche (a four-wheeled carriage sometimes known as a barouche), which usually fell apart before reaching the end of its journey, was bought for a song by the inn landlord when it finally limped to its destination, and was patched up by him to be sold on to the

next unsuspecting traveller. In winter most travellers used horse-drawn sledges, which they found faster, safer, and more comfortable than carriages. Coxe's description of his sledge makes it sound quite luxurious.

There was no general agreement about the roads. Their condition was so dependent on the weather, and changed so much from one season to another, that almost every journey was a special case. Pinkerton found them 'almost as good as our English roads, quite level, and covered with gravel and sand', while George Jones wrote that even on the Great Coastal Road near Helsinki 'there does not appear to have been any attempt to form a road, except by cutting down trees, leaving sufficient space for carts and cattle to pass'. For Carr, one of the few redeeming features of travelling in Finland was 'the exposition of every diverging road carefully, and intelligibly, marked out by a directing post'. Every traveller was agreed in praising the efficiency and cheapness of the posting system; it was very rare for horses not to be available. The inns were another matter entirely, and every traveller tells his own tale; it is usually a sad one.

We learn disappointingly little about either the accommodation or the sustenance which travellers experienced in Finland, and much of that little consists of horror stories about the bug-infested hovels which passed as post-houses and wayside inns, with their offerings of rancid fish, sour curds, and bread baked once a year. Coxe was almost a lone voice in praising the grouse: 'we seldom sat down to dinner, even at the commonest inns without being regaled with a brace of those delicious birds'. With only a few exceptions Finland was a route rather than a destination. Wraxall recorded that, in 1774, there were no inns at all between Turku and Helsinki; Clarke elaborated on his complaint:

What is to become of a traveller in the night, in such a country and climate, where there are not only no inns, but where he will find it actually impossible to procure a place of rest; not even a stable, in which he may find clean straw for his couch, or a place where he may lie down?

The answer, for Clarke and for many of his contemporaries, was simple: the 'travelling-carriage was . . . for us our moveable home'. 'Of course,' wrote Wraxall of his journey west from Turku, 'I dined and slept in the carriage, breakfasting each morning at the post-house.' Even when inns were available travellers still preferred to sleep in their own carriage, with the curtains drawn, not unlike modern tourists with their caravan or camper van.

Many of the stops were involuntary – waiting for a wind in Turku, or delayed by a broken carriage. Compared with travellers to Norway at this time, the British made very little contact with the local population. In Norway 'private hospitality was a precondition for travel', with the isolated residential farms of the clergy the commonest resort, while in Sweden travellers were 'well-pleased' with the accommodation offered in country seats. Except in Turku, Helsinki and Hamina, few travellers had any contact with the local residents, or sought any. Opportunities to stay with Finnish families were rare, and even when invitations were given they might not be taken up. Elliott is perhaps typical in this regard: on the packet from Stockholm to Turku he met a professor from Helsinki University who gave him 'letters to a count and countess, both Fins, whose houses are on the road through Finland', but he appears not to have taken up these introductions, and such domestic visits as he did pay were valued chiefly as an opportunity for gathering travel information, to get him on his way as soon as possible. The local

gentry were understandably anxious to meet and entertain cultured foreign visitors, but were perhaps more interested in hearing European news than in talking about Finland.

Travellers in northern Finland and Lapland rarely record staying at inns, and were much more likely to stay with the clergy, with wealthy landowners, or at farms. Clarke recorded that in Oulu Baron Silferhielm 'desired that we use his house as his own, while we staid'. Those who journeyed to Lapland went specifically in order to see and experience Lapland; they were not on the way to anywhere else. Certainly, in comparison to the rest of northern Europe, travellers in Lapland experienced a very wide variety of accommodation.

Nearly all these travellers went with an entourage of some sort, but they write very little about their servants, just as, in fashionable novels of the time there is little mention of the domestics. Clarke, for example, staying at the minister's house in Ylitornio, mentions only incidentally 'sending the servants away, to sleep in the village'. A guide was an absolute necessity for the Åland archipelago, and advisable for any deviation from the Great Coastal Road. In continental Europe educated Englishmen could generally get by in French, but in the north an interpreter was essential. A few travellers muddled along with Swedish – Captain Frankland claimed to have managed by talking 'broken English' to Swedes – but none could cope with Finnish, Sami ('Lappish') or Russian. Several travellers took their Swedish interpreter across to Finland, where (except in the occasional Finnish-speaking village) he could be useful until they passed Loviisa, when he was sent back. However ignorant travellers were in the native languages, their education had given most of them Latin, and it is surprising how often this enabled them to communicate, most usefully at the university in

Turku, but also in many parsonages, and even with officials at border crossings. They often commented – as the English still do – on the strange ‘foreign’ pronunciation of Latin.

During the years covered in this volume Finland became well documented in England. Travel writing was an immensely popular genre – second only to biography and far more prolific than fiction – and Finland had a share of the production. This is confirmed by a writer in the *Monthly Magazine* in July 1827:

That we have had enough and to spare of travels and voyages in all possible shapes, is, generally speaking, undeniable; and it is but fair to admit that Sweden and the adjacent countries have, within the last twenty years, had their due allotment of descriptive quartos and octavos.

Most of the books presented in this volume went through several editions, nearly all of them were reprinted in America, and some were included in multi-volume collections of travels, for example those edited by Mavor and by Pinkerton. The quarterly and monthly reviews and magazines devoted a lot of space to travel books, and gave very generous excerpts, so even readers who did not actually buy the books could easily learn about them. Finally there was a good deal of travel literature in translation, which further extended knowledge of Finland in England; Acerbi's *Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland* (1802) was the best known of these works, and gained a certain notoriety for an engraving of a sauna scene, the *Edinburgh Review* commenting that ‘the Finlandish bath has nothing to recommend it, but the naked accuracy of the representation’.

Like all travel books, these works tell us, often unintentionally, a good deal about the men who wrote them. (It is

not until the late 1820s that a British woman made a recorded journey to Finland.) The English abroad have a certain reputation for behaving uncompromisingly and even eccentrically, and for refusing to adapt to unfamiliar conditions. There were few travellers to Finland who did not, to some degree, take their prejudices abroad with them; Elliott was well aware of this tendency to chauvinism:

You have no doubt observed, as I have, that the English are universally respected, feared and envied in foreign countries, but never loved. Our countrymen are too conscious of their superiority as a nation, and frequently too little conscious of their inferiority as individuals. Instead of wishing to learn what they may from other nations, and to acquaint themselves with the opinions of foreigners on subjects of moral, political and scientific interest, they either strive to impose on them their habits and views, or else conduct themselves with a degree of reserve which is construed into hauteur.

To what extent this judgement is true modern readers may now decide for themselves.