MIDNIGHT HAVEN OF REST
Sketch by Mrs Alec Tweedie: frontispiece of the first edition of *Through Finland in Carts* (1897), showing ‘all the necessaries and luxuries of Finnish humble life’. Hanging between the roof beams are the round loaves described by so many travellers. (See pp.156–7.)
No Particular Hurry

BRITISH TRAVELLERS IN FINLAND
1830–1917

Tony Lurcock

‘Not being in any particular hurry, we lingered . . .’
Mrs Alec Tweedie

‘. . . what demand is there for hurry or punctuality in places like Riehki or Teerlä?’
Rosalind Travers
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I have consulted many books in the course of producing one, and they are listed in the bibliographies. I am particularly indebted to Basil Greenhill and Ann Gifford, The British Assault on Finland 1854–1855: A Forgotten Naval War (1988).

Publication of this volume has been made possible by a grant from Konstsmfuntet; thanks are due to Kaj-Gustaf Bergh, and also to Karl Grotenfelt for his help as an intermediary.

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. Places which are mentioned only once are usually translated in the text. There are a few places, almost all in Lapland, which I have not been able to identify. In a book of this size it has not proved possible to provide a map which shows every small village and settlement, but they can easily be found of the website http://kansalaisen.karttapiaikka.fi. The site recognises only Finnish names.

Björneborg  Pori
Borgå (Bergo) Porvoo
Brahestad Raahe
Ekenäs (Eckness) Tammisaari
Enare Inari
Enontekiö
Fölisön Seurasaari
Fredrikshamn Hamina
Gamla Karleby Kokkola
Hangö Hanko
Helsingfors Helsinky
Kajana Kajaani
Kexholm Käolisalmi
Lovisa (Louisa) Lovisa
Nykarleby Uusikaarlepyy
Nyslott Savonlinna
Nystad Uusikaupunki
Pyttis Pyhtä
Raumo Rauma
Seskar Seiskari
Sibho Sibbo
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**Beyond Finland**

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Map from Sylvia MacDougall ['Paul Waineman'], *A Summer Tour in Finland*, 1908, with place names in Swedish
Map c.1930 with place names in Finnish
Preface

‘Whether further volumes appear will have to depend on the reception of what follows’ was how I rather timidly concluded the Preface of ‘Not so Barren or Uncultivated’: British Travelers in Finland 1760–1830 (CB editions, 2010). Though not widely reviewed, the book seems slowly to have made itself known, and there has even been a modest reprint. So here is the second volume. It is, obviously, a continuation, but is also a separate work, telling its own story, and not assuming knowledge of the earlier volume.

The title No Particular Hurry reflects what is perhaps the most persistent difference between the two volumes. Before the 1830s a dominant purpose of the travellers was to get through Finland to Russia or to Sweden as quickly as possible. This purpose is seen still in the first two travellers here, Robert Paul and Thomas Whatley. After 1840 there is a striking reversal; in 1901 Harry de Windt wrote ‘I predict that, once in Finland, you will be in no hurry to leave it.’

The first volume traced a simple development: the transformation of the British conception of Finland from an unknown, even barbarous region into a picturesque country with some ‘tolerable’ hotels. The trajectory of No Particular Hurry is more complex, and the material more varied, but a unifying theme is that much of what is seen and described here shows Finland developing as a nation. ‘Suomi will rise to distinction, for this younger generation of Finlanders, as Ibsen says, is now “knocking at the door” of nations,’ wrote Mrs Alec Tweedie in 1897. Twenty years later Finland declared independence.

The book is first and foremost an anthology, with extracts chosen from more than two dozen accounts. There is more
material from this period than was available for the first volume; I have not always necessarily sought the ‘best’ passages for my extracts, but have attempted also to make the material varied, by avoiding duplication and by including descriptions of as many locations as possible. I give a short introduction to each writer, and make the book rather more than a chronology by linking some of the recurrent features. There is very little in the British accounts before 1830 which anticipates modern Finland; in the present volume we see modern Finland in the making.

I have again confined myself, with one exception, to printed material; all of the books and periodicals which are discussed and cited are by British authors, and published in Britain. I have corrected a few misprints in these sources, and have occasionally ventured to reform the paragraphing (usually in collections of letters). I am sorry that there has not been space for the American writer and diplomat, Bayard Taylor; his outstanding account of winter travelling in Lapland can be read on the CB editions website.

The nature of the material has presented a particular problem: the Baltic Campaign (1854–55), the part of the Crimean War which took the British and French fleets to the Baltic for two summers, is now little known in Britain, but it has an important part in the following pages. Although the war is an integral part of the whole book, I have separated it off with its own Introduction, rather than having it unbalance the general Introduction. Otherwise, I have followed customs established for the earlier volume.

During that earlier period few travellers took any account of the Finnish language; now they come across Finnish more and more, as it gains parity with Swedish, and as they travel inland, away from the Swedish-speaking coastal settlements. Most towns in Finland were still known by their Swedish names during this period (in fact ‘Helsingfors’ was still used by the British
during the Second World War), and travellers use Finnish place names only occasionally. A straw in the wind was *The Illustrated London News* writing in 1855 of ‘[t]he city of Helsingfors, called in the Finland dialect Helsinki’. Several popular destinations – Imatra and Joensuu, for example – do not have Swedish names (in the Åland Islands it is the other way round: there are no Finnish versions of the Swedish names). I have kept the Swedish names in quoted texts, and the Finnish names in my own text. In the few places where this could be confusing I have made use of parentheses, and have again provided a list of names in each language. Several of the writers describe places such as Vyborg and Sortavala, which were lost to Russia in the 1944 armistice.
Introduction

During the first years of the nineteenth century many of the British travellers to Finland had still been genuine adventurers, heading for an unexplored country, and willing to journey without maps. Some of them had particular interests too, of course – among them agriculture, economics, ethnology, botany, the picturesque, and the midnight sun – but they were all, to different extents, heading into the unknown. By the 1830s all this was changing, as I wrote in the Epilogue of Not so Barren or Uncultivated:

the extraordinary range of interests which had taken so many curious travellers to Finland in the later eighteenth century had evaporated. The tradition of the Grand Tour, or even its shadows and substitutes, had vanished . . . There was no more interest in Lapland magic, the vogue of the primitive had run its course, Rousseau had made way for Bentham, and artists had moved on from the picturesque and Romantic. When Murray published his first Handbook for Travellers in 1839 the last ‘unvisited corner’ of Europe had been mapped.

Finland was no longer just a remote location where visitors could exercise their romantic sensibilities: increasingly during the nineteenth century it attracted their socio-political interests. These interests were not confined to those who had visited the country; relations with Russia became a wider, recurrent concern. The Russian War in the Baltic, 1854–55, brought professional sailors and marines as well as journalists to Finland, and was widely reported in Britain. Later in the century there was a surge of political and ideological interest, with enthusiasm for
No Particular Hurry

the emergent Social Democratic Party, and for the advanced position which women held in society. From about 1890 there were many powerful advocates in England urging the Finnish cause against the process of Russification.

By the early nineteenth century genuine explorers were already giving way to travellers; what the present volume records is, essentially, the development of travel into tourism. As the practical problems involved in travelling both to and within Finland were steadily removed, tourists came to have time and leisure to see more, and to learn more about the country.

Travellers who write were joined by writers who travel; Elizabeth Rigby noted, and regretted, this development in an article as early as 1846, identifying

that more systematic set of travellers who regularly make a tour in order to make a book, and have thus pretty well divided the tourable world between them.

The age of the Grand Tour had passed, and with it the upper-class gentleman with his servants. The new generation was broadly middle-class; several were semi-professional travel-writers, simply adding Finland to their list and writing for readers as comfortably middle-class as themselves. Many of the accounts of Finnish travel are by women, who saw and described all manner of things which earlier travellers had not seen, or had not noticed.

Most of the early travellers had regarded Finland only as an intermediate stage on their way to or from Russia. In 1902, wrote Henry Norman, you could travel by train ‘from Charing Cross to St. Petersburg in fifty hours, with only one change of carriage where the gauge changes’. Since Russia could be reached so easily without even setting foot in Finland, those who went to Finland usually went by choice; for them the journey now mattered more than the arrival.
Murray’s *Handbook*

In 1896, when Mrs Alec Tweedie was planning the journey described in *Through Finland in Carts* (1897), she found that ‘no guide book was to be obtained in all London . . . No one ever dreamed of going to Finland apparently’. She may have been dramatising her own forthcoming adventure, or perhaps the seventh edition of John Murray’s *Handbook for Travellers in Russia, Poland, and Finland* (1893) was already sold out: the earlier editions had certainly been successful enough to merit regular revision and expansion. A survey of the successive editions shows clearly the ways in which travel in Finland changed over a period of some fifty years. Travellers who genuinely wanted to find experiences worth recording could no longer simply follow the Great Coastal Road along the south coast; they had to head into the interior.

The first edition, *A Handbook for Travellers in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Russia* (1839), included a twenty-eight page section on Finland. The Preface is signed simply T.D.W.; this was Thomas Denman Whatley, a Cambridge-educated barrister. Much of the Finland section is his own first-person narrative, and is a travel book quite as much as a guide:

The principal object of the following pages is to afford such of my travelling countrymen as are disposed to quit the more beaten paths of southern Europe, and explore the less known, but equally romantic, regions of the north – some useful information as to time and distance, which at present they can only obtain by actual experience. Beyond Hamburg, all is an unknown land . . .

The entire tour of the North can hardly be accomplished in a single summer, without hurrying over too much that deserves a more careful survey, or undergoing such a degree of bodily fatigue as would outweigh the pleasure.
‘No journey of the same extent,’ he concludes, ‘can . . . be put in competition with it, either for variety or interest.’

Whatley gives the Baltic timetable for 1838: from early May to late October there were three steamers a month from Stockholm to Cronstadt via Turku, Helsinki and Tallinn (Tallinn was known as Reval until 1917). Ideally the voyage from Stockholm to Turku took about thirty hours, and onwards to St Petersburg about eighty hours more, but he describes a journey to St Petersburg made in late September 1838 which took eight days. ‘There is little to make amends for this tedious voyage,’ he writes, recommending instead the steamer to Turku, and posting east on the Great Coastal Road. In the 1849 edition of the Handbook; we learn that the post route from Grisslehamn through the Åland Islands, so graphically described by many of the earliest travellers, ‘is but seldom taken since the introduction of steam navigation between Stockholm and Abo’. The steamer to St Petersburg is now considered to be reliable; there are no more descriptions of the horrors encountered on the Great Coastal Road. ‘The most convenient and agreeable mode of travelling in Finland,’ he now advises, ‘is by sea.’

1865 saw a greatly expanded New Edition. The author was T. Michelle, ‘Attache to Her Majesty’s Embassy at the Court of Russia’, and his name remains until the final edition of 1893. By this date Finland was recognised as a destination in its own right: we learn that ‘Finland may be reached from Lubeck by steamer once a week to Helsingfors’. The most significant changes in this edition are those which imply a very different type of traveller. The section on Finland (now entitled ‘Grand Duchy of Finland’) provides tables of weights and measures, lists of Finnish words and phrases, and specimen dialogues. Previously, Swedish had been recommended as the language for travelling, with Finnish dismissed as ‘their own perfectly unintelligible tongue’. This volume is recognisably a modern guide book, written with intelligent and inquisitive readers in mind.
Railways and lake steamers are mentioned for the first time, as part of the developing pattern of travel in central and eastern Finland:

Route 55, only. 4. Tavesthus. – A rly. unites Helsingfors with the town of Tavasethus, 80 m. distant, in the interior of the country. Fare 3 roubles. Tavastehus is well worth visiting in summer time, as it is most picturesquely situated, and gives a good idea of Finnish lake scenery. Small government steamboats go once or twice a week from Tavastehus up the river and lakes to Tammerfors . . . Very good posting hence into the interior.

The 1865 Handbook was reissued in 1868, with a few minor corrections and changes. Finland is now correctly called Suomi, not ‘Secomi’, and we learn that that ‘good Bavarian beer is to be had throughout the country’.

The Third Edition (1875) is substantially rewritten to reflect ‘changes and improvements in the mode of travelling’:

The sections relating to . . . Finland, which have been much enlarged, may have the effect of attracting travellers, and particularly sportsmen, to those picturesque countries. The construction of railways has brought them within comparatively easy reach of Western Europe.

The new routes go further into the interior of the country; for example, Route 67 is ‘Uleaborg to Kuopio’, and Route 69 is ‘Wiborg to Kuopio’. In addition, a number of excursions, supplementing these routes, are suggested. For the first time the Imatra falls are mentioned by name; by the end of the century they were probably the most popular tourist sight in Finland. The Fourth Edition (1888) lists steamers direct from England to Turku and Helsinki; Finland was now a chosen destination for the British.

Although the private carriage was still recommended in
1865, there are only a few accounts of it during this period. Joseph Sturge ‘found that the only posting here is by one rough two-wheeled vehicle . . . We therefore bought a comfortable carriage in which we can sleep at night, for about £20.’ He considered the posting arrangements efficient and cheap: ‘it has cost us about £3 to come here [Tampere] from Helsingfors, or about 4½d. per mile for three horses, double fares for driving, and our meals on the road; in England it would have cost near £20’. Finland was now opening up to those who did not aspire to a private carriage. Murray’s Handbook could be bought at any bookshop, and cheap public transport by water and rail was making even quite remote parts of Finland accessible, no longer the preserve of the rich or attractive only to the adventurous. As early as 1908 Sylvia MacDougall was disparaging popular tourism, writing in Imatra of ‘tawdry wooden pavilions . . . from which countless kodaks can be levelled’.

The earlier travellers had usually had servants, guides and interpreters with them. Now they seem to have been much more independent; Whatley (1848) advised against ‘taking English servants, particularly females’, as they ‘would prove a far greater trouble than comfort’. Timetables, maps, and later the telephone took many uncertainties out of travelling; some British tourists claimed to have managed without interpreters yet, puzzlingly, are able transcribe lengthy conversations with locals. Sometimes they got by with German – ‘without German,’ wrote Whatley, ‘I really think we should hardly have reached St. Petersburg’ – occasionally with French, and once, memorably, with Latin. Several spoke or learned Swedish; Finland was an obvious holiday destination for a Swedish speaker, especially when – like most of the women travellers – they were relatives, friends, or guests of wealthy Swedish-speaking families.

The most graphic descriptions by earlier travellers had been of winter travelling, but there are none in the present volume. Finland was becoming known, and promoted, for summer vaca-
introduction

Several of the summer visitors are nonetheless aware that Finland is really a winter country. Selina Bunbury, for example, writing in mid-May, claimed that ‘[n]othing can be more delightful than this scene in winter. In fact in the north one gets to like ice and snow just as much as we dislike the misty and cold season called winter in England.’ Anka Ryall notes Tweedie’s focus ‘on winter as Finland’s defining season. Even in the heat of summer [she] views the country as “ice-bound” by nature’. At times, some writers seem even a little ashamed of being in Finland in summer, when everything is so easy.

The creature comforts which tourists were now coming to expect could not yet be found in the far north, which is perhaps why Lapland remained largely unexplored during the nineteenth century. The only writers in this volume who could be regarded as explorers were in fact the three who went to Lapland: Edward Rae, Arthur J. Evans and C. J. Cutchliffe Hyne. The latter two were ‘crusted characters’ who, in their different ways, stood out against the superficial ease of tourism: Rae parodies at times the stance and style of pith-helmeted African explorers such as Stanley, while Hyne writes disdainfully that he has no interest in following ‘future tourist routes’, and sets off, against all advice, into ‘the Land of Horrible Flies’.

Lapland reappears as a regular destination only after the railway reached Rovaniemi in 1909. It was eventually to be branded, for better or for worse, as ‘The Official Hometown of Santa Claus’, and is nowadays served by seasonal day trips by air from England. This tourist hype was anticipated more than a hundred years ago by Sir George Renwick, who discovered in Tornio Finland’s ‘Ultima Thule’, a ‘fairy-tale town’, and ‘Elysium’; there he spent ‘golden hours’, and found a hotel where ‘[t]he service was everything that one could require in fairyland’.

Back in the eighteenth century some travellers to Lapland had hoped to find a fabled race of virtuous beings living in a Rousseauesque ‘state of nature’. By then Lapland had already
been popularised by the Scottish poet James Thomson as a new Arcadia, and his descriptions were frequently quoted in travellers’ accounts. It is surprising to find this earlier, prelapsarian picture of Finland echoed in Colonel Hamley’s memoirs of the Russian War of the 1850s. Aware that primitive simplicity, ‘without savagery or barbarism, has been ever a favourite topic of poets and pastoral romanticists’, he locates this primitiveness firmly in Åland, which he sees as a northern Utopia invaded and corrupted by war. Hamley felt that the military operations in Åland had destroyed an earthly paradise. This sort of idealisation of Finland is an undercurrent in several narratives: Alexander MacCallam Scott, on a boat trip outside Helsinki, writes, ‘we sailed straight into Arcady, back into the youth of the world and the primal age of innocence’; Tweedie describes ‘a primitive dinner’ at a post-station where the people ‘were so honest and simple, so far removed from civilisation and its corrupting influences on their thoughts, that they and their life seemed to take us back a couple centuries at least.’ It is revealing that while the earlier travellers use ‘primitive’ pejoratively, by the 1890s it is associated with charm rather than disgust. For all this emphasis on native innocence, though, many visitors found a society more advanced than England. By the early twentieth century Finland was, paradoxically, being idealised for primitiveness at the same time as it was being praised for progressiveness.

The picture of Finland found in the British accounts from the period of the Russian War (1854–55) is a remarkably attractive one. The Finns were well-regarded – and not only because they were not Russian. The British fleet was in the Baltic only during the best months of the year, returning to England as autumn set in, and we repeatedly come across descriptions which seem to belong not to a war but to a vacation, with bathing and excursions ashore to pick blueberries. ‘The first few days in September were exceedingly fine,’ writes William Gerard Don,
‘and we made the most of them on shore in cricket matches, and other amusements’.

As a result of the war, different aspects of Finland were getting known in England. The name of Runeberg was heard, perhaps for the first time: in July 1854 the Illustrated London News published three of his poems in translation, claiming that ‘Runeberg is not only the modern Homer of Finland, but of all the lands of the north’. In September it devoted a whole page to printing the ‘Patriot Song of the Finlanders’: ‘Vårt Land’ in Swedish, with English translation, and music by Pacius. The Kalevala was surprisingly well known in England; Crawf ord’s translation was published in 1888, nineteen years before Kirby’s Everyman edition. After this date almost all the writers refer to it; the poem seems almost to have been required reading for those writing on Finland, and quoting from it proof that they had done their homework.

‘Embryo Qualities’

Several of the qualities for which Finland has become notable in recent times are seen in embryo, as it were, in the second half of the nineteenth century. Already in the 1850s writers are recording their surprise at finding that in Finland the fishermen and small farmers, and their wives, were all literate. Every household and boat, it seemed, contained a Bible and a prayer book. Captain Sulivan describes an episode near Degerby, in Åland, when he stopped and searched a small sloop, crewed by a couple and their young son. He was surprised to find a ‘nice clean cabin’ containing a ‘Testament and Psalter’, and reflected:

It is certainly not creditable to us as a nation that we should be so behind in education those we have previously considered half-barbarous Finns. They can hardly believe that numbers of people in England cannot read.

Sturje noted during his visit in 1856 that ‘every Finn of sound
No Particular Hurry

mind and adult age can read’. Even in ‘isolated farms’ in Lapland Evans found ‘one or two books about, mostly Bible and Prayer books it is true, & a large proportion of them as far as we can test, can read and write’. ‘They are,’ wrote Renwick in 1911, ‘undoubtedly the best educated nation in the world.’ (See notes.)

Earlier in the nineteenth century several retired British naval officers had travelled between Stockholm and Turku on Swedish and Finnish boats, and had had little good to say about either the boats or their crews. Some of them simply felt fortunate not to have been drowned. Now British naval officers were full of praise for Finnish ships and Finnish seamanship. Ten years before the war Charles Fredrick Henningsen wrote: ‘[t]he only reasonable hope which Russia might entertain . . . would be in the prospect of eventually manning her fleets with her Finnish subjects, the only portion of the population of her vast empire containing sailors’. Sturge, viewing ‘the school for merchant seamen’ in Turku, asked: ‘would not our merchant service be benefitted by similar institutions?’

The Commander of the Fleet, Sir Charles James Napier, admired all that he saw of naval activity in Finland, and gave this authoritative assessment of Finnish expertise:

In most of the ports are excellent ship-building yards . . . The science of naval architecture is carried to a degree of perfection which will bear comparison with the state of ship-building in England. The Fins are indefatigable in producing the finest models from other countries, and their aim is, if not to improve upon them, at least to equal them . . . [To] a power like Russia, aiming every year more and more at naval excellence, the possession of Finland is invaluable; and the cordial co-operation of its artisans no less so.

The Finnish seamen are equally good with their ships, and from them Russia draws her best supply for manning
INTRODUCTION

her navy . . . They are sober, steady, and active, possessing all the good qualities of the English seaman. Hence their services are deemed desirable in British merchant ships wherever they can be obtained.

Higher praise could hardly be imagined. In 2012, Finland still has three large shipyards, and is a major builder of cruise liners.

Finland today is famous also as a nation of musicians, with Finnish conductors in charge of orchestras from Norway to New Zealand. S. S. Hill writes of the ‘genius of the Finns for music and poetry’, and much later Miss Clive-Bayley praises the singing on the steamer between Tampere and Rouvesi: ‘[t]he students on board our steamer sang some magnificent songs . . . The compass of the voices, and of the music sung, seemed to me greater than is usual in England’. Tweedie was perhaps the most judicious of the musical critics:

That Finland is thoroughly musical may be inferred from the dozens of choirs sent to the Sordavala Festival from all parts of the country. The peasant voices, in spite of being but slightly trained, or at all events trained very little, sing together wonderfully.

Ernest Young and Renwick each devote a whole chapter to Finnish music; they praise the singers, and give brief accounts of the work of Kajanus, Sibelius, Järnefelt, Merikanto, and others. Renwick mentions the establishment of orchestras in the principal towns, and writes of Finland’s ‘high rank in the musical world’, concluding ‘[t]he rise of this latest national school of music makes me wonder if there is here a lesson for England’.

The notice taken of music is associated with the recurrent interest in runo singing and in the Kalevala. As early as 1800 Edward Daniel Clarke had transcribed a Finnish folk poem, with a translation by Franzén, and John Bowring had published a long article ‘Runes of Finland’ in 1827. Tweedie has several romantic descriptions of runo singers, with a fine photograph
No Particular Hurry

of one group. John Dover Wilson, the first English lektor at Helsinki University, described how in 1906 he had attended a meeting of the Finnish Literary Society where ‘two bards from the interior were to sing runos’; ‘though of course I could not follow the Finnish,’ he wrote ‘I came away with the strong impression that Homer may have listened to just such bards.’ There are several descriptions of the Finnish kantele; Tweedie prints a striking photograph of two players. In the 1890s Edward Westermarck and Yrjö Hirn each presented a kantele to the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

‘Sauna’, the only Finnish word to be found in an English dictionary, is not recorded in England before Tweedie used it in 1897, but English readers could have known of it for more than century: an engraving in Acerbi’s Travels through Sweden, Finland and Lapland brought it vividly before British eyes in 1802, the Edinburgh Review commenting that ‘the Finlandish bath has nothing to recommend it but the naked accuracy of the representation’. The British were excluded from the sauna by their native prudery; nude bathing was regarded as ‘a most extraordinary spectacle’. Harry De Windt submitted gracefully in Oulu:

This was my first experience of a bath à la Finnoise, and I am not anxious to renew it, for to stand in puris naturalibus and be soaped from head to foot by a buxom lady (even of mature years) is somewhat trying to a novice. But this ceremony was apparently an essential part of the performance, and I therefore made no demur.

The sauna, nonetheless, slowly becomes a memorable part of the British experience in Finland; by the twentieth century taking a sauna was often on the tourist’s list. The first, enthusiastic description is by Rae in 1873, who bathed in Lapland just a few weeks before Evans, and probably in the same sauna as the American traveller Bayard Taylor twenty years earlier, but it had no greater enthusiast than the redoubtable Tweedie. ‘A
Finnish bath,’ she wrote, ‘can never be forgotten’. ‘I have never heard of a deliberately misconducted sauna’ wrote Harry Bell in 1950; today he would simply not understand the English equation of ‘sauna’ with ‘sex club’.

The rise of Helsinki and the decline of Turku is a recurring theme throughout the whole of this period: ‘one is the young wife,’ wrote Bunbury, ‘the other the antiquated dowager’. On 3 September 1830, Captain Charles Frankland awoke early in Helsinki and ‘sallied out to look at the city . . . It is the most beautiful and the most interesting new city I ever beheld,’ he wrote. Visitors now rarely found Turku either beautiful or interesting, Hill writing even of the ‘gloom and desolation’. As the century wore on a more frequent contrast was between Tallinn, which resembled ‘old feudal Germany’ with its ‘curious, high-roofed buildings with old gables and fantastic gargoyles and hanging stories, . . . Gothic and Byzantine churches, . . . battlemented town walls and gates’, and Helsinki, ‘a grand, new town, with straight, wide, level streets, lofty churches, stately barracks, an imperial palace, [and] a hotel nearly as grand and almost unique in its comforts of board and lodging’. Frank Hall Standish, arriving in 1837, was astonished to discover in Helsinki

a beautiful modern town, with a theatre and a ball-room, both of which were open yesterday, and to which we were invited . . . half the population flocked to the pier at our arrival, and the military band hailed us with arias from the operas of Rossini, Bellini, and other fashionable composers . . .

During the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55) strict travel restrictions were imposed on Russian citizens, with the intention of keeping revolutionary ideas out of the country. It was relatively easy for Russians to get travel permits to Finland, and the
steamers made the journey easy. Helsinki was quick to capitalise on this, attracting well-to-do Russians anxious to escape the muggy summer atmosphere of St Petersburg. Helsinki’s famous park, Kaivopuisto, was developed, with its fine restaurant, Kai-vohuone, and the ‘Ullanlinna Sea Spa’, opened in 1838.

The transformation not just of Helsinki but of all of Finland from what had been perceived by many British travellers as a semi-barbaric backwater to an elegant and unthreatening holiday venue was more or less complete by 1917. The changes are seen in three areas in particular: transport, accommodation, and food.

**Transport**

The discomforts and perils encountered on the journey between Stockholm and Turku, so often and so graphically described in earlier accounts, now belonged completely to the past. This was now the age of the steamer. John S. Maxwell describes his 1848 journey: he left Stockholm in ‘an excellent boat of Swedish build, with English engines’, spending the night at an inn in Turku, continuing the next day to Helsinki, then to Tallinn, where he spent six hours ashore before the last leg of the journey to St Petersburg. Eight years later Sturge travelled from Calais by ‘rapid railway transit’ to Lübeck, intending to go on via Stockholm and Åbo, but found that there was a direct steamer to Helsinki the next day. His journey time from England was a little under six days.

‘Beyond Hamburg, all is an unknown land,’ Whatley had written in 1839. No longer; the final chapter of De Windt’s *Finland As It Is* (1901), ‘How to get to Finland’, describes three routes:

- **Route I. Via** Calais, Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Fare, exclusive of sleeping-car (first class) £16-18/10. (60 hours.)
- **Route II. Via** Calais, Copenhagen, and Stockholm (first class) £13-1/9. (70 hours).
- **Via** Flushing (first class) £9-5/9. (71 hours).
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Via Hook of Holland (first class) £9-3/9. (74 hours.)
Finally there is route No. 3 – by sea direct from Hull . . .
The Finland Steamship Company . . . keeps up an all-the-year-round service by the Arcturus and Polaris, new and powerful fifteen-knot steamers fitted throughout with electric light and with accommodation for seventy saloon, and thirty second class, passengers. These sister-ships resemble miniature ocean-liners, with their broad promenade decks, palatial saloons, and large, airy state-rooms, all amidships. A ladies’ boudoir and comfortable smoking-room are also provided, so that the most modern requirements of luxurious sea-travel are fulfilled, while to ensure safety the vessels are divided into watertight compartments. There is a first-class cuisine on board, and Finnish customs are observed.

These ships – which were perhaps prototypes for Viking and Silja Lines, which ply the routes between Sweden and Finland today – sailed every Saturday, and the fare was £5 single and £8 return first class (£3 and £5 second class), with meals charged daily at 6s and 4s respectively. Midweek passengers could take the Astrea on Wednesdays to Turku via Copenhagen.

Steamers transformed travel within Finland as well, with the opening up of the lake districts of the central and eastern provinces. After Joseph Marshall in 1768 no British traveller recorded a visit to Savonlinna for well over a century, but the castle now became a popular tourist sight. Savonlinna, and later Kuopio, were used as touring centres, with local journeys by steamer. ‘All those who have travelled on the boats,’ writes Young, ‘are unanimous as to the quality of the accommodation, the cheapness of the fares, and the abundance and variety of the food.’ ‘Delightful lake steamers,’ enthuses MacDougall, ‘are found all over Finland, furnished usually with comfortable wicker deck-chairs in which one can laze and revel in the scenery.’ De Windt considered the steamers ‘equal in every
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respect to those of the Rhine or Danube’. For the British this was an unfamiliar means of transport, and one which inspired detailed and affectionate description.

Whatley had warned that, despite the timetable, captains ‘have the most independent notions’ of when to leave. Until the end of the century British travellers on both Baltic and lake steamers complained about this brazen disregard of the published timetable. Antonio Gallenga, a Times correspondent, fulminated against the ‘outrageous way in which a steam navigation company takes upon itself to waste the passengers’ time’. Bunbury, travelling from St Petersburg, stopped at Tallinn: ‘In reply to the question as to our time of stay here, the captain ambiguously replied, “I must not say that I shall stop longer than two hours.”’ When Tweedie’s steamer from Savonlinna to Punkaharju left early she reiterated incredulously that ‘the steamer actually did start twenty minutes before its appointed hour, and no-one then or after made the slightest complaint. Imagine our Flying Scotsman speeding North even one minute before the advertised hour!’

Trains complemented the coastal and lake steamers, and the British discovered many endearing qualities in the Finnish railways. Young was an early enthusiast: ‘The cars are excellent,’ he wrote ‘and the sleeping arrangements are such as are not open to any but the well-to-do in England’.

‘Trains in Finland are like the tortoise,’ wrote MacDougall; many writers comment on this, but few complain about it. These were, after all, mostly sightseers, not impatient subjects in a hurry to get to Russia. One of the most characteristic scenes, often recorded, is the way in which both trains and boats stopped periodically to stock up with wood.

The interstices of the journeys were still taken by cart. The ‘springless cart’, the epitome of discomfort, comes in for many agonised descriptions – ‘Such jolting!’ exclaims Evans, ‘we are almost reduced to jellies’; ‘we had almost to hold our teeth fast
in our mouths,’ writes Rae. Many travellers describe these carts being driven on dangerous roads, at high speed, by very small boys: ‘they drive so desperately,’ wrote Robert Bateman Paul, ‘and with such a total inattention to the safety of the springs, that we were very soon obliged to take the reins into our own hands’. These boys were obviously ancestors of the modern race of Finnish rally drivers. Posting still had an important role in the national transport system since steamers and trains did not cover all routes. By the end of the period it was perhaps gaining some sort of favour with tourists as being a genuine, even quaint relic of a vanishing way of life. This is Young in 1914:

Posting is not recommended for delicate ladies or for those who cannot put up with the simplest of food and the plainest of accommodation, but young men in search of an unconventional holiday, and possessed of the ability to laugh at temporary disarrangements of previously well-laid plans, would get enough fun and enjoyment to last for a long time.

The published accounts are now predominantly of tourists taking their summer holidays; the train, steamer, and cart could transport them into the heart of a land so beautiful that some writers more or less exhausted their superlatives in describing it. ‘If in Finland you are so unhappy as to seek nothing but scenery,’ wrote H. W. Nevinson, ‘you need hardly move from wherever you may be.’ Clive-Bayley had never ‘dreamt of anything more lovely than this country of Ladoga’. Nature was not the only attraction: small towns which a few years earlier would have been visited only by explorers now had a distinct summer season; Clive-Bailey was one of several British ladies who visited Sortavala, which she describes as ‘evidently flourishing and well-to-do . . . The Tourist Club have opened up and laid out a charming park, where we spent some hours the day after our arrival.’ By the end of the century there were ‘essential’
tourist attractions such as Kangasala (near Tampere), the rapids at Imatra, and Punkaharju. In Imatra Gallenga wrote of the ‘water-fall . . . awing by its grandeur even eyes who have seen Niagara’, but he is rather more impressed by the attractiveness and hospitality of the English Fishing Club. De Windt was told that Punkaharju ‘is our show place; you might as well pass through Naples without seeing Pompeii’. Rosalind Travers, by contrast, writes how glad she was to have seen it only out of season and in the rain. By 1908 MacDougall could write that ‘travelling has of late years so increased in comfort, that a traveller need only look at the wilderness in a series of wonderful pictures’.

**Board and Lodging**

Before 1830 a recurrent theme was the appalled reactions of travellers to the ‘execrable’ conditions at the post-houses between the west coast and Vyborg. ‘[S]eldom rising to mediocrity,’ wrote Clarke at the turn of the century, adding that ‘beds are a species of accommodation never found’. Even when they were found travellers often could not bear to sleep in them. Less than forty years later things had changed: Whatley enjoyed ‘a very substantial supper’ at a post-house where ‘beds were clean and comfortable’. Twenty years later Sturge describes ‘post-houses, which consist usually of two or three good rooms, attached to a peasant’s house, and furnished with a stove, beds, &c, for the use of travellers’. The first ‘Society House’ (Societetshuset; Seurahuone in Finnish) was erected in Turku in 1811–12, and quickly became the city’s most popular resort for travellers. Society Houses were open for business in Vaasa (1821), Pori (1825), Helsinki (1833), Viborg (1833), Hämeenlinna (1840) and Porvoo (1847). These were all impressive buildings in prominent positions. Some of the buildings still stand; the most striking of them, perhaps, overlooking the south harbour in Helsinki, is now the City Hall. They were
established primarily as upper-class meeting places, but seemed to cope well with visitors: Rigby, describing a pleasure cruise from Tallinn to Helsinki in 1839, wrote of ‘the Societäts Haus, the only hotel in the town, and a magnificent building’, where most of the hundred and eighty passengers found accommodation. Towards the end of the century they were being built also with tourists in mind; in 1901 de Windt wrote:

Let a stranger be ever so ignorant of the language, he has only, on arrival at a wharf or railway station, to tell the cabman to drive to the ‘Societetshuset,’ and he will at once be taken to the best hotel in the place.

During the earlier period travellers soon learned that there would be nothing fit to eat on a journey across Finland, and that they would need to take their own provisions with them. Now this was necessary only in Lapland; Evans and Balfour ordered a meal at their ‘dirty miserable’ inn in Sodankyla, but ‘had to fall back on our pemmican when it came!’ Pemmican is best known for its use on Scott’s expedition to the South Pole. Unprovided travellers had given vivid descriptions of locally sourced food: rancid fish, sour milk, and bread baked once a year. By mid-century complaints have ceased; many of them describe the abundant fresh fish, fruit, and wonderful dairy produce – the milk and cream are praised extravagantly. Rae enjoyed ‘an admirable and delicate collection of dishes’ in Kokkola, and Tweedie ‘luxurious feasts’ in Lapinlahti, while at the Hôtel du Nord in Helsinki, Standish seemed to appreciate the Finnish way of doing things: ‘although they serve the soup in the middle of dinner, and Alpine strawberries and cream after the fish, I was able to make a hearty repast.’

Women Travellers
In 1849 Whatley had written ‘it is generally believed that ladies cannot travel in Scandinavia; nothing can be more erroneous’.
Rigby, the first woman traveller to have written significantly about Finland, would have agreed. She had described in an article in 1845 how women are by their very nature suited to be travel writers, and possess an ability denied to men, one which would now be seen as a species of ‘multi-tasking’:

A man either starts on his travels with a particular object in view, or, failing that, drives a hobby of his own the whole way before him; whereas a woman, accustomed by habit, if not created by nature, to diffuse her mind more equally on all that is presented, and less troubled with pre-conceived ideas as to what is most important to observe, goes picking up materials much more indiscriminately, and where, as in travelling, little things are of great significance, frequently much more to the purpose.

There are six woman travellers presented in this volume, and they demonstrate the truth of Rigby’s thesis in many ways. Several travelled occasionally unescorted, and showed many other instances of independence. They describe meetings with Finnish women in terms which few if any of the male writers would have been capable of.

There was a great deal that British women found congenial in Finland. The way in which the women in peasant society shared the men’s work both on land and at sea had been noticed, and seen as something of a novelty, by officers during the Russian War: Sulivan notes with surprise and admiration that ‘[t]he women here are quite as good sailors as their husbands and brothers’. Some fifty years later Young describes a scene in Vyborg:

The logs are thrown out by the women, stacked by the women, and I should not have been surprised, though I know it is not the case, if I had been told that the trees had been planted, tended, and felled by women, for woman does many curious things in Finland. Women give you your ticket at the railway station, cash your cheque at
the bank, sweep the streets, slaughter cattle, carry bricks, engage in brick-laying, plumbing and plastering, and in many other trades and occupations that we regard as particularly fitted for men. They have their compensation; every woman has a vote, and a number of them have also seats in parliament.

Often women are described as doing ‘men’s jobs’ better than the men: ‘[t]he booking-office clerks are often girls, and they attend to one’s wants with a courtesy and grace that is not conspicuous in the young men,’ writes Young. Finland was the first country in Europe to enfranchise women (1906) and to elect them to parliament (1907). British women noted all this with great satisfaction: Travers, packing her bags in England in 1908, announced, ‘I’ll go to the only civilised country in Europe, the one place where women have got their full rights.’ ‘Finnish women,’ wrote Tweedie in 1913, ‘are the most advanced in the world today.’

The political aspect of women’s rights was an obvious manifestation, and is discussed by most of the British writers, male and female. They appreciated the way in which sexual equality was not just a campaigning issue, but was broadly taken for granted. ‘Women’s rights,’ wrote Clive-Bayley, had never ‘agitated my soul’; she merely noted ‘[t]here are women as well as men students . . . [t]hey attend lectures together, and are on a perfect footing of equality in every respect’. It was this naturalness and openness which she especially appreciated, and she noticed it more widely in Finnish society:

There is one feature of Helsingfors life which strikes a foreigner as distinctly good, though curious. I heard of no cases of ‘nerves,’ or hysteria, or ‘revolting daughters.’ Parents have perhaps in some instances tried to keep their girls at home, but money is scarce, and occupation is plentiful, and every girl claims her right to make her
own way in the world. There are, it may be, some four or five unmarried ladies without a profession, but they are mostly engaged in charitable works. ‘Ennui’ apparently does not exist — possibly a reason for the non-appearance of the ills referred to above! There is no line drawn which makes it difficult for a lady of high birth to earn a living. You may bear a title, and yet be a governess, a bank-clerk, or a reporter. You may even be in a shop. You are just as much in society, if you belong to it by birth, as if you sat in your drawing-room all day, doing nothing.

Travers, who had been involved in the Women’s Suffrage Movement in England, became closely interested in ‘the growth and development of Feminism in Finland’, meeting leaders of the Woman’s Movement.

**Political background; Russification**

By the Treaty of Hamina (1809) Finland was ceded by Sweden to Russia; it was not incorporated, but became an autonomous Grand Duchy, keeping its former constitution and legal system, and retaining the Lutheran faith. Alexander I, shortly after, both confirmed and extended ‘the framework of laws and institutions’ inherited from Sweden. The development and decay of the relationship with Russia later in the century is reflected in British writings, but not, of course, systematically.

Finland had become a nation ‘in a political sense’, but, writes D. G. Kirby ‘[w]ether the Finnish people constituted a nation in 1809 is another matter’. As the century progressed, British travellers saw and noted different ways in which the country was progressing towards nationhood, particularly by becoming aware of Finnish as a national language.

Apart from the time of the Russian War, it was only late in the century that the British interest in Finland became political. The actual status granted by Tsar Alexander I in 1809 began to be questioned by Russia in the 1880s; Finland’s ‘connection
with the Empire,’ wrote Gallenga in 1882, ‘already fraught with much trouble and vexation in the past, may be the cause of still greater danger to them in the future.’ By 1890 Finland was being systematically reined in, with traditional rights (such as the separate Finnish postal service) removed. The appointment of General Bobrikov as Governor-General in 1898 and the ‘February Manifesto’ delivered by Nicholas II in 1899 were clear indications of ‘a new policy towards Finland’, ending its autonomy, its independent legislature and its own armed forces. The Tsar refused to receive the Grand Address, with half a million Finnish signatures, or an International Address, collected by Finnish expatriates and signed by ‘over 1000 distinguished supporters of the Finnish cause’. The situation was widely reported in British newspapers, notably by Dover Wilson, the Finland correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*. Finland had many advocates in England, among them Nevinson, a campaigning journalist who actually took the Finnish cause to King Edward VII at Buckingham Palace. *The Finland Bulletin* came out regularly in London from 1900 to 1905, chronicling the steady erosion of Finland’s rights. In 1911 the Anglo-Finnish Society ‘came into being as one of the consequences of Finland’s time of troubles’; there was not a British traveller in the new century who was unaware of Finland’s political plight. The Russian bear, tamed in 1856, was roaring again. In 1903 Finnish resistance began to turn to violence, and in the following year Bobrikov was assassinated. Many of the Finnish rights were restored following violent uprisings in Russia in 1905, but repression was soon renewed by the new Russian prime minister, Stolypin.

These political difficulties had little or no effect on tourism, which was being promoted as never before. MacDougall was alone in even mentioning them in this context, dismissing as fanciful tourists’ fears that ‘they may there be pursued by secret police, or come in for the tail-end of a bomb intended
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for someone else!’ The Finnish Tourist Association had issued its first brochure in English in 1894, trusting that it would be ‘the means of bringing the Grand-Duchy of Finland as a tourist-resort to the notice of the Anglo Saxon Race’. Finland – ‘The Land of a Thousand Lakes’, a booklet published in Hull in 1899, detailed ‘in a practical way the facilities for Tourists wishing to spend their Summer Holidays in Finland’. These were followed by a succession of opulent travel books in the early years of the century.

It may come as a surprise to a modern reader of a book about foreign travel to find no complaints about being overcharged, taken for a ride, or swindled. Transport, public and private, was noted as costing a fraction of British rates, board and lodging (except in Imatra) often derisively little, and all sorts of produce – cigars, crayfish, knives – not only cheap but of excellent quality. Scott concluded a little advertising article in a Finland Line brochure in 1914: ‘Living is cheap, and the hotels are not as a rule expensive. I fear, however, that in order to keep them so, we, who know the charms of Finland, ought to keep the secret to ourselves.’

While all this might suggest that Finland was becoming overrun by British tourists by the early twentieth century, the tourists themselves often record how they felt like rare visitants, and were regarded as objects of curiosity. They had to come to terms with the fact that they were at least as interesting to the Finns as the Finns were to them. Throughout her travels Tweedie felt that she was on display: near Lapinlahti the ‘natives’ all ‘curtsied or took off their hats’, while the visit of the English ladies was reported in the local papers in Savonlinna and in Oulu. The landlord of the post-house in Roventiemi, wrote Hyne ‘regarded us much in the light of a travelling circus, and brought us in relays of callers whenever we were on the premises.’
Rev. Robert Bateman Paul

On 28 July 1836 Robert Paul was returning from Moscow, where he had travelled as companion to the son of a friend, when he found himself ‘beyond the frontier, and fairly in Finland, that comparatively unknown land, which has been traversed by so few of our countrymen’. Paul, a former Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and now a country clergyman, was already known for his books on Aristotle. *Journal of a Tour to Moscow in the Summer of 1836* is his only travel book.

Travelling in their own carriage, they discovered that ‘what is called a horse’s mouth, the little Finland nags do not possess in the slightest degree’; when Paul tried to pull their post horse back the reins snapped, and the small boy whom he had demoted to passenger because of his dangerous driving, saved the day by calling out to the horse. Realising that it could be managed ‘only by uttering certain odd sounds’, Paul started practising Finnish horse language as if he were a latter-day Gulliver, and soon achieved such proficiency that ‘our driving was rather an amusement than otherwise’.

‘I have never travelled in any country, where the foreigner has so little trouble, and is so little imposed upon,’ he wrote; the police officer at Vyborg was ‘a civil, well-behaved man’, and so it continued. They passed Hamina, which ‘looked dreary and desolate’, and Loviisa and Porvoo, neither ‘of much importance’, before arriving in Helsinki. The only hitch on the way had been when their horses, driven by the proprietor of one post-house, had jibbed at the first hill:

The Finn, a little dry old man, with a face like an apple that has been withered by the frost, sat with the most provoking indifference, raising and lowering his little arm with the