I shall survey the diaries, journals, and travel books that contain the impressions Iceland made upon 40 Britishers who travelled there between 1772 and 1897. There were earlier travellers' accounts: Reise igiennem Island is the result of investigations made between 1752 and 1757 by two Icelandic naturalists, Eggert Olafsson and Bjarni Pålsson. Though he derided its repetitive structure, Von Troil mined that book for his Bref rörande en resa til Island. Both of these books are important; but the first, published in 1772, was written in Danish; and the second, published in 1777, in Swedish. I shall begin with the first British account, that by Sir Joseph Banks' of his 1772 expedition, the one that inspired Von Troil's book. Banks' Journals have a particularly British set of concerns, many of which are found in the accounts of later British travellers. We can see Banks, then, as initiating a tradition, a way of talking about Icelanders and the strange island that had been their home for 900 years. That island, a place of fire and ice, was indeed strange, and it became a workshop, a testing place, for the new science of geology. But to many British travellers the Icelanders who lived there were not so strange; they were in fact regarded as relatives, now down on their luck of course, but part of the same racial stock from which they had sprung. They viewed these Icelandic farmers as the descendants of hardy Norsemen, of brave Vikings who in their longboats had left Norway in the 8th and 9th centuries to settle not just Iceland, but also significant portions of the British Isles. England had had two Scandinavian kings, after all, and often those travellers were eager to trace the most positive aspects of British civil and cultural life back to those Vikings. Many Icelanders, particularly young radicals working for independence from Denmark, were undoubtedly pleased that Iceland became a destination for so many 19th century Britishers, some of them famous, and that so many of them were familiar with the sagas which they themselves were using as tools to forge a national identity.

For each account I shall present data on its publication history (including translations into Icelandic), its machinery (number and type of appendixes, etc.), its illustrations (sometimes pirated from previous publications), its indebtedness to previous accounts, and the like. Some descriptions
developed into stock motifs that then became strands in a tradition of British attitudes about Iceland, and some writers were as influenced by that tradition as by the people and scenes they tried to describe. The earlier travellers set those traditions in place, and their reports are usually fact-filled and serious; therefore my comments on them will be fuller than those I devote to the later tourists.

A majority of these British visitors were heavy hitters: their achievements got 19 of them into the Dictionary of National Biography; ten had titles; three were eminent doctors (one became physician to Queen Victoria, another discovered the causes of Bright's disease). One was a charming Irish Lord who left perhaps the most endearing—certainly the most reprinted—account of any visit to Iceland's high latitudes. Two were painters who exhibited at the Royal Academy. There were a handful of academics, probably well-known in their time. One of England's premier novelists left an engaging record of his short visit. So did a President of the Royal Society. Other important visitors included a founder of English Socialism, a British Ambassador to the United States, and Victorian England's most dashing explorer-adventurer.

The 12 Britishers who journeyed to Iceland between 1772 and 1834 were scientists; they were interested in Iceland's hot springs and volcanos, in its flora and fauna. The remaining 28—although the label doesn't fit all of them—can be called tourists. They were off on holiday jaunts, eager to spend a few days or weeks roughing it on horseback and in tents. They were interested in "marvels," particularly the Geysirs; or in "sport," shooting and fishing. Some were aficionados of Iceland's medieval literature, off on pilgrimages to saga sites. The first of these tourists arrived in 1856 on the Danish steamship "Thor," on its initial run to Reykjavik. Its passengers were not held hostage, like all previous travellers, by the vagaries of shifting winds. Instead the clock would hold them in thrall, since steam ships arrived and left on schedule, and so one's activities in Iceland were likely to be limited to a quick tour of Thingvellir and the Geysirs. Scores of Britishers would now come to Iceland, since fares were reasonable (compared to the cost of chartering a sailing vessel), and most would take that same quick tour, and thus did the steamship create tourists.

One of those earlier traveller-scientists complained—in 1861, 50 years after his first visit—about "the numerous growth of an inferior race of travellers ... [who] hurrying from place to place, in obedience to the times and course of the universal steamboat, forfeit all the true purposes of travel. ... Voyages to Iceland are now falling too much into the fashion of modern travel in Greece. The Geysirs, Hecla, and Thingvalla are hurriedly seen in the one case, as Athens, Marathon and Corinth are in the other" (Holland, pp. 273, 275). Many of these tourists would soon add Hlidarendi to that itinerary, carrying with them the first English translation of Njála. (See Dasent). With its long and authoritative introduction, its maps and plates, its elaborately decorated binding, it can be seen as an icon of certain British attitudes toward Iceland, as well as the means for armchair travellers to visit the
Iceland of their dreams. But now let us turn to a chronological survey of the actual travellers and discussions of their representations of an actual Iceland.

**BANKS, 1772**

Banks, Joseph, "The Journals of Joseph Banks's Voyage up Great Britain's West Coast to Iceland and to the Orkney Isles, July to October, 1772." Edited by R.A. Rauschenberg. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 117 (1973): 186-226. With the break-up of Banks' estate, the two journals were lost to public view until this century. The first, with daily entries from July 12 to September 6, has little on Iceland because the Banks party did not get there until August 28. The shorter entries in the second journal cover events from September 17 to October 22, including the party's one trek inland to investigate thermal activities at Geysir and to climb Hekla. Von Troil had access to these journals, but made little use of them. Banks' account of the Hekla ascent, the first by Britishers, was published in HOOKER.

Three artists on the expedition, the brothers James and John Miller and John Clevely, Jr., produced scores of diagrams, drafts, sketches, finished drawings, and watercolors; 24 of them were reproduced, in black and white, by Halldor Hermansson. Writing before the discovery and publication of the journals, he thought the illustrations to be the expedition's most valuable legacy (Hermansson, p. 18). Frank Ponzi, who reprinted 26 of the illustrations, agrees: "of the entire material derived from the expedition, the items considered of most importance today are, undoubtedly, the visual records" (Ponzi, *Old*, p. 18). Several plates made from Banks expedition illustrations, most importantly (since it was often copied), "Woman in her Bridal Gown," appear in HOOKER. Translated into Icelandic by Jakob Benediktsson: "Sir Joseph Banks, Dagbókarbrot ír Islandsferd 1772," *Skírnir*, 124 (1950): 210-22.

If Sir Joseph Banks (1744-1820) often seems bored and disappointed here, Rauschenberg suggests it is because his mind was far off, in the South Pacific to be exact, with Captain Cook on his second grand voyage of discovery. Banks, a wealthy member of the landed gentry and an enthusiastic botanist, had helped sponsor the first one; and so he had been aboard the "Endeavor" on its famous voyage to Australia and Tahiti (1768-1771), and he had returned to London more feted and acclaimed in some circles than Captain Cook himself. Banks was then asked to help organize the second voyage, and he agreed, spending again huge sums of his own money. But arguments with the Admiralty about the ship's size and quarters for the scientists and artists forced him to withdraw. He felt obligated, however, to employ that talented retinue to advance knowledge; and Iceland, with its volcanos and geysers, of increasing interest in scientific circles, could be reached in what was left of the sailing season. So Banks rented a brig (it had a crew of 12 and cost 100 pounds a month) and headed north with that band of scientists and artists. Though Banks never returned to Iceland, its problems and potential were never far from his mind. And since he became President of the Royal
Society in 1778 and a member of the Privy Council in 1797, Iceland had an important friend at the highest levels of British government. Banks encouraged young naturalists like Stanley and Hooker to do field work in Iceland, and he had many correspondents there, clergymen and farmers to whom he sent books and practical advice on sheep and crops, and the like. He also helped Icelanders caught up in difficulties stemming from the Anglo-Danish wars (1801-18), and he was deeply involved in British plans to annex Iceland, writing letters and abstracts advising such action. He might also have been involved in the "revolution" of 1809; see Hooker.

Here are Banks' reactions to the first Icelanders he saw, fishermen induced aboard to guide them to an anchorage: "Their dress attracted our attention. Each had on a garment of a kind of parchment serving for both boots and breeches and a jacket of sheep skin. These however were only coverings over their proper dress and they took them off before they would [come] up onto the ship notwithstanding which when they came in they smelt so fishy and rank that it was disagreeable to come near them and [they] were lousy to admiration. They trembled very visibly nor did a large glass of brandy which each of them drank quite remove their apprehensions" (p. 214). Bad smells, lice, liquor--three topics that will recur so often in British descriptions of Icelanders that they become motifs--are all here, in the initial description penned by a British traveller. But Banks is never again quite so specific. At Hafnafjord, a "multitude of Icelanders came on board none of whom were so stinking and filthy as those we saw yesterday. In general they were clean and tidy and well looked people" (p. 214). Curious Icelanders come to peer upon the Britishers, who, "to encourage trade gave every one who came a small present 2 yards of ribband or a little tobacco. To do them justice, no people could be more civil than they were or more thankful for the small presents they received" (p. 216). There are obvious parallels between Banks' attitude to these Icelanders and to those natives he had encountered in the South Seas a few years earlier. He is kind and generous, a civilizing father-figure pondering exotic and primitive, child-like beings. Such attitudes will surface in many of the subsequent British accounts of Icelanders.

All of the Icelanders Banks met apparently revered him, as did the Danish officials with whom he traded more substantial gifts, and dinners. Since a cook and servants were included in Banks' retinue, he hosted some elaborate meals; one dinner "served up in courses appeared very different from any Danish entertainment that they had seen. The variety of wines also surprised them but most of all the French horns which played to them at their desire" (p. 217). French horns at Hafnarfjord! Of course the guests were surprised; it's a surprising and delightful detail. No future expedition would be so opulent.

The day after Banks and his men had moved their bedding and equipment ashore, to take up quarters in a capacious warehouse, they "went out to botanize a little" and "they found but few plants from the lateness of the season" (p. 216). The botanizing they'd done on their previous voyage comes to mind, as well as the trove of exotic specimens and drawings they had brought back to
London, a scientific bonanza that they had hoped to match on their second voyage with Captain Cook. But circumstances had landed them here, in a cold and windy land that seemed to grow only lava. They examined the lava wastes and collected mineralogical specimens and data; Banks' descriptions of Icelandic terrain are, however, brief and muted: here were "plates of stone often of large dimensions standing upon their edges intolerable to walk upon and rougher to the eye than any thing I have seen before" (p. 217). Subsequent travellers' accounts will be fuller, and they will often employ adjectives meant to evoke astonishment and terror, rhetoric associated with the early romantics and attitudes toward the "sublime" (See Burke).

The Banks party took only one trip into the interior, spending 13 days on an excursion that took them to Hekla, which they climbed, and also to Thingvelliir and the Geysirs, obligatory stops for nearly all future visitors to Iceland, both travellers and tourists. Banks' descriptions are unemotional and scientific, laced with columns of figures showing the depths of fissures or the times and heights of eruptions. When Banks and a few companions approach the summit of Hekla, they're met "by a wind against us so strong we could hardly get on frost laying and cold very severe . . . Fog and flying clouds ourselves covrd with the ice cloaths like buckram all hands a hearty draught of brandy" (p. 223). The wind, their ice-stiffened clothing, the welcome brandy, all serve to bring the moment to life. One wishes that Banks had written more, or had the time to revise these field notes.

References to Banks and this first British expedition turn up in later accounts. A member of Holland's party would note that "Sir Joseph cut a figure here. He had a dozen Livery servants and two French horns" (BAINE, p. 114). Hooker and Holland and Mackenzie, they all met Icelanders who remembered and praised Banks, some--like Olafur Stephensen of Vithey--with great enthusiasm; see HOOKER. Banks' expedition was of immense importance, not only because Von Troil's book was widely read; but because Banks himself maintained strong interests and close contacts in Iceland. The thousands of people who came to know or do business with the President of the Royal Society--Banks held that post for 40 years--these visitors received Banks' greeting card; on it was embossed a map of Iceland, of that northern island that in 1772 had had to serve as a surrogate for Tahiti.

STANLEY, 1789

Orlygur, 1979. In a useful introduction, Steindór remarks that if the famed scholar Grímur Thorkelin had been along as guide and translator, as had been planned originally, the Stanley journals might have contained less invective against Icelanders. This elaborate edition—one of several successful ventures into travel literature by Örn og Orlyggur—includes 25 color plates, among them superb reproductions of paintings that Edward Dayes and Nicholas Pocock, well-known British artists, did from sketches made on the expedition. Two of Dayes' paintings of the Geysir are filled with vibrant and steamy color, and Pocock's renderings of the summit of Snaefellsnesjökull are stunningly beautiful. Engravings made from Dayes and Pocock paintings were taken to Iceland as gifts 20 years later; see HOOKER. Several of these paintings, as well as watercolors done by Stanley himself, are reproduced in Ponzi, 18 Öld.

John Thomas Stanley (1766-1850)—who would become Sir John Stanley and then the first Baron Stanley of Alderly—was given the best education his family's stupendous fortune could provide. He travelled and studied abroad, becoming fluent in French, German, and Italian; and, adumbrating adventures in Iceland, he scaled Mounts Etna and Vesuvius. James Wright (1770-1794) earned a medical degree in 1791, and died in India a few years later. Isaac Benners (1766-?) was a student of chemistry at Edinburgh University. John Baine (1754-?) was a math teacher, astronomer, draughtsman and surveyor. West thinks Wright was the most reliable of the three diarists, Benners the most careless.

The scientific yield of the expedition was meager, amounting to two papers Stanley published in Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, 3 (1794): "An Account of the Hot Springs near Rykum" [Reykir], pp.127-37; and "An Account of the Hot Springs near Haukadal," pp. 138-53. Stanley, like Banks, helped Icelanders in trouble, as well as Britshers who were curious about Iceland, or writing books about their travels there. His paper on the hot springs at Reykir appears in MACKENZIE. Selections from letters he sent to Barrow's father, as well as sketches he made of Stappen and Snaefellsnesjökull, appear in BARROW, as do selections from WRIGHT and BENNERS, specifically the accounts of their ascent of Snaefellsjökull. These accounts were translated into Icelandic and published in Andvari, in 1891.

Wright, Benners, and Baine were not writing for publication; therefore their observations are unembroidered and sometimes refreshingly sharp and clear. Moreover, when we stack their descriptions together, a kind of trinocular representation emerges, one that often yields interesting dimensions and depths. Consider their first reactions to Iceland's terrain: Wright speaks of "the dreadful effects of fire" and of "vast heaps of Solid Black and Rugged Lava" (p. 56). And Benners of an "extensive field of burning matter" and of "horrid devastation" . . "from time immemorial" (p. 69). Baine, however, remarks on the lava's "irregular masses with deep cavities among it. The resemblance to a Scoria of an Iron Furnace is perfect ... it is yet very sharp pointed [and] disagreeable to walk upon" (p. 79). It's significant that the younger men, both university students,
employ the fashionable diction of the "sublime" school, e.g., "dreadful effects of fire," "vast heaps," "horrid devastation," "time immemorial," while the older compares lava to slag from a furnace and says exactly why it is so "disagreeable."

Here's a second set, their initial impressions of Icelanders: Wright says that one of the natives "with great complaisance took a piece of Tobacco which [he] had been chewing out of his mouth and offered it to me, this mark of his friendship however I declined ... after dinner a Parson of the country came aboard who seemed to be strongly marked with the prevailing misfortune of his Countrymen: Stupidity" (p. 85). Benners observes that "the people ... appear the most stupid wretches I have seen, they are not so well made ... as the inhabitants of the Fero Isles, neither are the women so handsome ... and when they attempt to render one any Service, it is ... much clothed in lucrative views ... [they] are most of them afflicted with Scrophulus Ringworms" (p. 93). And Baine informs us that, "The people are ... very meagre, dirty and greedy. ... the most avaricious creatures that can be. ... As a Specimen of the cleanliness of these people one of them yesterday offered Mr. Crawford a chew of Tobacco--out of his own mouth ... Every man and Mother's daughter of them appears scabbed ... one that sees their houses, cloathes and persons must be of the opinion that a great part of their misery has originated from their want of cleanliness" (p. 100). These observations strike common chords, all negative. The Icelanders are dirty and therefore afflicted with skin diseases; they are, moreover, stupid and indolent; and, finally, they are overreaching, selfish, and even "most avaricious." Many subsequent accounts touch upon Icelanders' disinterest in hygiene, in putting to effective use the hot water that bubbled out of the ground; and a few accounts mention thick-headed and lazy guides (a motif in all travel writing), but the above references to sharp dealing are unique among the accounts of the early travellers, during this, the supposedly Golden Age of travel, because it was before the steamboat brought the hordes of tourists who would turn naive and generous Icelanders into mercenary wretches.

In another trinocular set, descriptions of a successful ascent of Hekla, the students again employ "sublime" diction, with Wright exalting over the "most hideous streams" of lava that are "most dreadful," with "chasms and dark frightful voids" (p. 108). Benners speaks of "burnt Lava, pumice stone and vitrified matter, like as a thousand furnaces had been employed in assisting one of the greatest devastations that can possibly be conceived (p. 123). Baine, however, says only that the lava is "exceedingly rough" adding that, "We have been so fortunate as to find a guide who went up with Sir J. Banks in 1772; he is a good kind of fellow with no great appearance of Spirit so we shall not be led into unnecessary difficulties by intention" (p. 143). Such a fellow would be out of place in the fearsome terrain depicted by Wright and Benners. Hekla, while a difficult climb, presented few real horrors. Its winds, "with great fury," blew Baine's hat away, and so his hat didn't reach the summit, but he did, and his straight-forward and sometimes laconic descriptions are quite appealing. His account would also have appealed to Burton, who derided the "dangers"
travellers met in Iceland, dangers often rooted in a romantic tradition of landscape description rather than in actuality. The low-key descriptions of Hekla ascents by experienced climbers suggest similar conclusions; see BRYCE.

There are many other memorable passages in these diaries. There's the portrait of the effusive Olafur Stephensen, who parades for the visitors (exactly as he would 20 years later for Hooker, Holland, and Mackenzie), his gifts from Banks (received 17 years before), his many diplomas and awards, and finally his daughter in a traditional bridal gown. There's the moment of intrigue with the mysterious stranger who comes out to the brig at 2 a.m., and Baine's surprise that he is actually Count Levetzow, the highest Danish official in the land. There's Wright's pleased consternation at the number of wines served up at an official feast, and his descriptions of the delight of the citizens of Reykjavík when the ship's crew comes ashore to play fiddles and dance on the green, and of the king's falcons and falconer in a special building in Reykjavík, and of his visit with the Bishop of Skálholt who speaks three languages perfectly. (The motif of the learned and erudite clergyman occurs in many subsequent accounts). Wright also visits a woman "delivered of a child a few hours before." She is covered with thick blankets "panting for air" and "the child was tyed up with cords in coarse woolen stuffs--so amazingly tight it had become perfectly livid" (p. 62). Wright strips it, tries to get the father to understand that the baby mustn't be so bundled, but then he stops short, usually going into more detail about plants and rocks than he does about people. There are, however, revealing glimpses of the natives, ones that show them living in small, dark, dirty, odiferous hovels. Such descriptions anticipate those in HOOKER and HENDERSON, where there are more ample views of the prevailing poverty in late 18th and early 19th century Iceland. Those were arduous decades, when bad weather and geophysical disorders at home combined with political ones abroad to conspire against a simple fishing and farming folk who were then among the poorest in Europe.

What emerges here also is the rounded figure of an exceptional person: the expedition's youthful leader. Stanley was only 22, and his capabilities--dispensing mutton and morale (grog), placating fearful sailors, negotiating for horses, helping Baines set up instruments, scaling Snaefellsnesjökull--are thoroughly impressive. Many years after the expedition, Stanley annotated some of the diary entries, and his observations are often vivid and profound. It's therefore unfortunate that West relegated them to endnotes in each volume. Many deserve more prominence, e.g., Stanley's thoughts on the Faroese, or on British plans to annex Iceland; his memories of the Danish Governor in Iceland, Count Levetzow and of the sad fate of his beautiful Countess. And Stanley's descriptions of Snaefellsnesjökull are evocative and beautiful--and instructive, as when he comments upon the feverish rhetoric travellers employ: "The words how beautiful how grand, how sublime, how delightful escape often mechanically from us when we have only given a look at what is before us and all our thoughts are of the best spot to sit down on or of our basket of provisions"
Stanley was also a talented naturalist and a competent artist; he spoke Latin, French, and German with equal ease, and he was a canny judge of character—in every way a worthy follower in the footsteps of Banks. And like Banks, he was someone who remained interested in Iceland and its problems, one who was ready to help Icelanders in trouble or travellers in need of counsel.

HOOPER, 1809

Hooker, William Jackson, *Journal of a Tour in Iceland in the Summer of 1809*. Yarmouth: Not Published, 1811. London: W. Miller, 1811, lxii + 496 pp. Second edition, with additions. 2 Vols. London: John Murray, 1813. The additions include a few corrections and a description of an Icelandic interior borrowed from Mackenzie; two maps, one of Iceland and the other of its southwest corner, showing Hooker's three treks inland (to the Geysirs, Krisuvik, and Borgarnes). Appendixes A and B include primary sources on the "revolution" of 1809; Appendix C is on Hecla (with passages from Banks) and includes an account of the 1783 eruption of Skaptarfell, this by Magnus Stephensen and translated by Jorgen Jorgensen; Appendix D includes odes and letters from Icelanders to Banks and Captain Jones (all in Latin); and Appendix E is Hooker's important "List of Icelandic Plants." (It gets reprinted in Mackenzie). Appendix F, on Danish Ordinances, appears only in the second edition. With illustrations from drawings made on the Banks expedition, including, in color, "An Icelandic Lady in her Bridal Dress," two pictures of the Geysir, diagrams of an Icelandic house and of Almannagjá; the latter appear also in Banks. One version of the second edition has as frontispiece a profile of Hooker instead of the ubiquitous bride.

Sir William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865), yet another wealthy young naturalist, made a reputation botanizing in the wilds of Scotland, and Banks encouraged him to continue such work in Iceland. Hooker's full descriptions of Icelandic flora provided the basis for later taxonomies, e.g., Appendix 2 in Mackenzie. Since his notes and drawings were lost when his ship caught fire and sunk on the way home, Hooker borrowed materials from Banks to help him in writing this first book-length treatment by a Britisher of Iceland. Hooker became a famous botanist, lecturing brilliantly at the University of Glasgow and writing dozens of books. He was invited to take over Kew Gardens in 1841, and his improvements led to today's Royal Botanic Gardens.

Hooker's plans for a South Seas voyage in 1809 fell through, and he says that "Sir Joseph Banks proposed to me as a compensation ... that I should ... spend my summer in Iceland" (pp. v-vi). So just as Banks went to Iceland instead of the South Pacific, so too will Hooker. Banks, however, had sailed north with scientists and artists, and with ten servants and two French horns. Hooker would sail north with Jorgen Jorgensen and Samuel Phelps, a brave Danish seaman and an unscrupulous British merchant, men more interested in politics and profits than in the advancement
of science. Hooker was present at the opening event of the 1809 "revolution," when the Danish governor of Iceland--Count Trampe-- was arrested and confined aboard Phelps' ship. And he was present when Jorgensen issued his famous proclamations, e.g., "All Danish authority ceases in Iceland," as well as commands such as "All sorts of arms, without exception, such as muskets, pistols, cutlasses, daggers, or ammunition, shall instantly be delivered up." Hooker's eye-witness descriptions of the "revolution" are clear, and so is his outright admiration for Jorgensen, who emerges from most accounts as an opportunist who issued grandiose edicts, created a silly Icelandic flag ("blue, with three white stockfish thereon"), and marched about the country with a rag-tag troop armed with a few muskets. But a much more substantial figure arises from the pages of Hooker.

Early in his journal, he remarks on the "pleasant society" (p. 1) of Phelps and Jorgensen. It would have been understandable if here Hooker had offered some foreshadowing suggestions that the power-mongering activities of this pair would curtail his scientific excursions and cause, finally, the loss of all of his painstakingly gathered rocks and flora, all of his careful notes, when their ship was set ablaze--by sailors who'd aided Phelps and Jorgensen--on its return voyage. So, even though he has personal reasons to be angry, his descriptions, particularly of Jorgensen, are consistently favorable. On their approach to Reykjavík, Hooker asserts that Jorgensen saved the ship "by his own exertions, where fear or hurry prevented the common sailors from doing their duty" (p. 8). And at the end of his journal Hooker again has high praise for Jorgensen's "courage and superiority in seamanship" (p. 294), since the Dane boarded the "Margaret and Ann," ablaze and sinking far off shore, to achieve a brilliant rescue. All hands owed their lives, recalled Hooker, to "the extraordinary exertions of Mr. Jorgensen, at a time when nearly the whole of the ship's crew seemed paralyzed with fear. He, too, as would be expected by all who knew his character, was the last to quit the vessel" (pp. 295-96). And in between these feats of seamanship, in more than a dozen instances, Hooker always acclaims Jorgensen's probity.

Pondering the take-over of power, Hooker reflects that "our little party of Englishmen, ... removed from all possibility of succour, enemies to the sovereign of the country, and having, moreover, made the governor prisoner and claimed possession of the whole island, yet, nevertheless, live unmolested ... Our state of security was undoubtedly owing to the willingness of the natives to shake off the yoke of the Danes, and to [believe] that it was the British alone who could ... keep them from a state of actual starvation; in proof of which ... the satisfaction of the inhabitants, at the prospect of being placed under English government was repeatedly expressed to me, and that, not only by the poorer class of people, but also by those high in power in the island" (pp. 181-82). It's significant here that Hooker includes himself as one of the agents in the take-over. And it's also significant that his sentiments and rhetoric are very like those in letters and
reports that Sir Joseph Banks—who got Hooker his berth on the "Margaret and Anne"—had written only a few years previously on the desirability of Britain annexing Iceland (See Hermansson).

Banks had also given Hooker a letter of introduction to the aforementioned Olafur Stephenson, the ex-governor, the same garrulous and flamboyant personage who had feasted Wright a generation earlier, and would do the same for Holland and Mackenzie the following summer, snowing his guests with food and drink, with references to his many diplomas and degrees, and with demonstrations of the beauties of Icelandic dress. Hooker, two days after the "revolution," brings that letter to Olafur, and Jorgensen translates it. The old man often interrupted him "to relate some of the many noble and generous acts which Baron Banks (as he called him) had done for his countrymen. ... Then he related anecdotes of what passed during Sir Joseph's stay in the island thirty-seven years ago, ... and of the Icelanders, who, during the war with Denmark, were made prisoners by the English, but released, and supplied with money ... by Sir Joseph's generosity. ... (p. 51). Olafur's excited interruptions are triggered by his memories of "Baron" Banks, not just of that first expedition, but also—and more importantly—of the aid, in just the past few years, that Banks had extended to Icelanders in difficulties because of the Anglo-Danish war. One of those Icelanders was in fact the old man's son, and in the process of writing letters for and to him Banks had unequivocally promoted British annexation of Iceland. Now here's Jorgensen, who had himself just carried out a weird sort of personal annexation of Iceland, translating the Banks letter for the governor and the governor's warm effusions about Banks for Hooker. Jorgensen is very much the middle man here, but in a much larger sense he is in the midst of things; for certainly the governor would have known that his present translator was also his newly proclaimed leader. But Hooker never at this point mentions the "revolution." Are we to believe that Trampe's arrest, the confiscation of fire arms, Jorgensen's proclamations making Iceland independent—all these momentous events—did not come into their conversation during the ten hours they were Olafur's guests? Phelps is also introduced in this letter, as "a scientific as well as a commercial man," and it might therefore have caused the old governor and his son to "suspect that the British government was back of the affair" (Hermansson, pp. 59-60).

I wish to suggest that HOOKER contains substantial hints that Banks was indeed involved. We must assume that the recent violent events were discussed the afternoon and evening of the feast on Videy, but Hooker took pains not to mention the "revolution" while discussing Banks, both here in the text of his journal and later in the appendixes. Why? Perhaps he was following instructions from Banks who would have been pleased if an altercation started by Phelps and Jorgensen had led to a group of Icelanders coming forward to ask for British aid. But such a group had not materialized. Phelps had treated the Count too roughly, and Jorgensen had acted too flamboyantly, with his proclamations, his new flag, his raggedy escort. The Icelanders drew back, and when Captain Jones of the British sloop "Talbot" arrived on the scene in early August
and listened to the woes of the Danish merchants and heard of Trampe's arrest and confinement, he ordered all the principals to London where matters could be sorted out. He acted correctly, and of course Banks had to side with him. But earlier on, perhaps Banks saw Jorgensen and Phelps, the one daring and talented, the other hard-bitten and practical, as potential instruments of British power. If they succeeded, fine; if they failed, the opprobrium would be on their heads, and Banks' prior involvement must be downplayed. Hooker has gone along; and throughout, he manages to praise both Jorgensen and Banks, but never at the same time. I realize that I'm simplifying a very complex, much-written-about event, but I've come to doubt that Jorgensen was as much a loose cannon as most commentators have made him out to be, and that Banks was as innocent as he claimed.

Of the Icelanders generally, Hooker asserts that "the greater part ... are afflicted with the most inveterate cutaneous complaints, from which their extreme ignorance and cost of medicines render them incapable of applying either remedy or palliative. The sick and the lame are seen crawling about in almost every part of the island" (p. xxvi). References to skin diseases turn up in most of these accounts, but details about the lamed "crawling about" are unusual. So are the statistics here on infant mortality and on mid-wives who have not been properly trained, and on clergymen who receive mere pittances, so parsimonious are Danish authorities, some of whom kept money in Copenhagen that had been raised to help Icelanders "after the dreadful volcanic eruption of 1783" (p. xxix). Hooker's animosity to the Danes is unrelenting, just as is his sympathy for the Icelanders. He suggests that a solution to their poverty lay nearby, in the cod-rich waters off Iceland's coasts: "If the fisheries were properly conducted they might prove a source of inexhaustible wealth" (p. liv). The fisheries and the Icelanders' inability to exploit them are a recurrent motif; see FORBES and BURTON.

Detailed descriptions of Icelandic plants remind us that Hooker was primarily a botanist, but he also offers uncluttered prose-portraits of lava and the Geysirs, of wide-ranging birds, and of human fauna: some Icelandic pilots are "unprepossessing," perhaps because their hair "was matted together, and visibly swarming with little vermin" (p. 9). Some women drying fish along the beach are "stout and lusty, but exceedingly filthy" with "long and dirty hair" (p. 15). Other motifs recur here, like the Icelandic fondness for rum and for kissing strangers. Hooker also offers sharp and memorable vignettes, e.g., of the yearly salmon catching near Reykjavík, with hundreds of people attending, scabby Icelanders eating dry fish heads and skyr on one bank, while well-dressed Danes have little sandwiches and wine on the other. But they are all enjoying themselves in the bright sun, watching as salmon are thrown up on the bank. Savignac, a major figure in the political events of that summer, was present. He was adept at grabbing salmon, and he "afforded infinite amusement to his female assistants, who took great pleasure in throwing the largest of the fish at him" (p. 187).
Holland will describe this same event the following summer, and again Savignac will be there, but playing a more sinister role.

**HOLLAND and MACKENZIE, 1810**


With 3 maps, a portrait of Sir Henry Holland (from about 1840), and 26 of Holland's field drawings and maps, as well as his sketches, notes, tables, and daily journal. David Holland, his great grandson, gave all this material to the Landsbókasafn Islands in 1955. Wawn presents convincing proof that MACKENZIE is "massively, though clumsily dependent on Holland's scrupulously prepared and long neglected text" (p. xii). Wawn also sketches in British interests in Iceland from 1400-1800, traces "The Genesis of an Icelandophile: Henry Holland 1788-1810," and engagingly discusses politics in Iceland in 1809 ("tallow and turmoil"), and the topography and people the Mackenzie party met on its three treks in the southwest of Iceland in the summer of 1810. Includes six appendixes: 1) a weather register, 2) a table of the parishes of Iceland, 3) remarks on literature and education (expanded into chapter five in MACKENZIE), 4) a page from the 1805 Saurbaer parish register, 5) notes and tables on commerce, and 6) notes on Iceland's population in 1801. Wawn is responsible for a seventh appendix, a glossary of geological terms. The journal proper, the record of daily events from April to August, was translated into Icelandic by Steindor Steindorsson: *Dagbok i Islandsferd 1810*. Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagid, 1960. Includes 12 full-page illustrations, reprinted in black and white, taken from MACKENZIE; 18 sketches from Holland's journal; a helpful introduction, notes, and two appendixes: "Nokkur bref, sem vid koma ferdinni," and "Um ferd Hollands til Islands sumarid 1871--úr aevísögu Hollands."

Sir Henry Holland (1788-1873) went to Edinburgh to study in 1806, and his wide range of interests--agriculture, Norse antiquities, geology, medicine--must have made Mackenzie's invitation to join the Iceland expedition irresistible. His research on Icelandic diseases, specifically on cow pox, led to the completion of an MD Dissertation. He was admitted to the Royal Society in 1816, and appointed physician to Queen Victoria in 1837. He wrote essays and reviews on many subjects, several on Iceland, and he travelled the wide world over (Dasent called him "Henry, the far-traveller"). He returned to Iceland at least two more times, the last time in 1871 when he was 84 (see Appendix 2 in Steindor's 1960 translation). That's when he met he met another British Icelandophile, William Morris; see Wawn's commentary on this meeting, pp. 1-3.


Mackenzie, in an "Advertisement" that accompanied the second edition, said that its demand "within the short period of six months from its first publication, while it has greatly flattered the author and his fellow-travellers [he should have said "fellow-authors"], has allowed but little time for procuring additional information." But some changes were made by Holland in his 72-page "Preliminary Dissertation on the History and Literature of Iceland" and in the chapters he wrote on contemporary education and literature, and on government and religion. And Mackenzie made minor, but sometimes significant, changes in the chapters for which he claimed responsibility: those on the three excursions, and on rural affairs, commerce, and mineralogy. An appendix, on the mineralogy of Madiera, was omitted from the second edition, and Mackenzie's account of the 1809 "revolution," only a paragraph in the first edition, runs to eight pages in the second. Of the remaining six appendixes, three (on Icelandic diseases, history and literature, and a weather register) are by Holland; the final three are on music (one page of scores), minerals and flora; the last, a complete taxonomy, is borrowed from HOOKER. No changes were made in the final chapter, on Zoology and Botany, which was written by another brilliant student Mackenzie had enlisted for the expedition. This was Richard Bright (1789-1858), then a promising geologist and medical student, later to become an eminent physician and researcher, responsible for discovering the kidney disorder now known as "Bright's Disease."

There are 15 plates, eight in color. These are the first color plates of Icelandic scenes published in England, and they are quite impressive, particularly those of Hafnafjord, of thermal activities near Krisuvik, of the broad vistas from Hlidarendi, and of Mt. Hekla, a common goal for a majority of these early travellers. The Geysirs are presented in three black and white plates. So is a double-page foldout of Reykjavik, a fine engraving taken from a sketch by Mackenzie: a sweeping vista of the long curve of the bay, small houses along the shore, with Esjafjall outlined against towering white clouds. A full-page color print, 'Icelandic Costume,' presents five figures in formal regalia, three of them women, one holding a large cod fish, another the hand of a little girl.

Sir George Mackenzie (1780-1843) was an avid geologist as well as an aficionado of Gothick aspects of the North. Immediately upon returning from Iceland he wrote a play, Helga, or the Rival Minstrels, which was based on Gunnlaugs Saga. Wawn says that "it was conceived as tragic melodrama and received [at Edinburgh's Theatre Royal on 22 January 1812] as ludicrous farce" (p. 58). Like Banks, Mackenzie remained interested in Dano-Icelandic politics, and he also continued his successful scientific career, travelling widely to observe, collect, and report on geological phenomena. He published books and articles on a broad range of topics: mineralogy, agriculture, animal husbandry, convicts in Australia, Hill Forts in Britain, phrenology, and aesthetics.
Readers have always appreciated Holland's signed contributions to MACKENZIE: the opening "Dissertation" and the chapters on education and law. But it wasn't until the publication of HOLLAND that they could see how extensively the major portion of MACKENZIE depended upon Holland's journals. Thousands of readers surely assumed that the 200 pages devoted to the three excursions were written by Sir George; he claims that he was helped by "materials of Dr. Holland's journal" (p. xiii). But what he took from Holland goes beyond the borders of help over into the realms of plagiarism, with phrases, sentences, whole paragraphs lifted, with not a nod of recognition to his younger colleague.

Here's one example: Holland reports on crowds of curious Icelanders wondering why these foreign visitors are hammering and chipping away at the ubiquitous lava, "collecting fragments of what they [the natives] deem so little valuable. This astonishment was further increased when following our steps into the house, they saw us wrapping up the specimens of lava in paper. Whether they thought us very wise or very foolish we had no means of determining" (p. 182). Mackenzie writes that the Icelanders' wonder "changed to astonishment, when following us into the house, they saw us carefully wrapping our specimens in paper. Whether they thought us very wise or very foolish, we could not ascertain" (pp. 170-71). The British investigators have themselves become the objects of speculation. As the Icelanders' wonder grows into astonishment, the narrator himself seems to think that wrapping lava is more foolish than wise. The neat ironies of the situation, the words that frame the rueful and humorous reflections, all are Holland's.

Wawn speaks of "sharp differences of descriptive priority" (p. 4) between Holland and Mackenzie, whose "Gothick" sensibilities colored his prose. The following renderings of a chance discovery provide an illuminating example. Holland: "We found ... a collection of bones, evidently belonging to the human skeleton, with some fragments of clothes, apparently the dress of a female [who] had been lost--it was supposed among the snow " (pp. 124-25). Mackenzie: "we found the remains of a woman ... Her clothes and bones were lying scattered about; the bones of one leg remained in the stocking. It is probable that she had missed the path during a thick shower of snow, and had fallen over the precipice, where her body was torn to pieces by eagles and foxes" (p. 110). Such gratuitous additions as the "precipice" and the raptors tearing the body "to pieces" indicate Mackenzie's priorities, and one is not surprised that his lava wastes are usually "horrid" and "hideous." Holland's descriptions are precise. Some of them are also often laced with an irreverent sense of humor. About Olafur Stephensen, that former governor of Iceland who entertained a string of British visitors--starting with Banks 37 years before-- in remarkably similar ways, with excessive food and drink and oratory, Holland remarks, "Mr Steffensen is now more than 80 years of age. His character we were enabled without difficulty to comprehend. Vanity is the predominating ingredient" (p. 91). Concerning a ball thrown for them by Reykjavik's establishment, Holland reports that they ate "cold mutton, beef, and hams, cheese, butter, biscuits and wines," and there
was an exchange of songs, the British guests contributing a "clumsy chorus of God Save the King." Then "the glasses were filled with wine, and the ladies commenced in unison a lively little air, in which the health of Sir G. Mackenzie was given, with an acclamation corresponding to the English huzzah." The party went on "until half past four in the morning. We both began and concluded our gaieties by the light of the sun." And Holland notes, finally, that many of the guests "left the house a little less steadily than they entered it-- Among others, the Right Reverend Father, the Bishop of all Iceland was observed to be somewhat affected by the potations of the evening" (pp. 104-5).

With his emphasis on the Bishop's title, in his mock horror that such an eminence got drunk, Holland strikes just the right note, mimicking the elderly moralists who will be, or act, shocked. His light-hearted descriptions of eating dinner in shifts, of toasts and songs lustily proffered (if only imperfectly understood), of the crowded confusion of the dance floor, all bring the evening to life. At another event--that yearly salmonfest--Holland describes a fight between Savignac (involved in a friendlier fracas at the same fest the previous year) and some Icelanders. He struck one of them, and "was immediately assailed by several of the fishermen. ... Mr. Savignac is dreaded as well as disliked in Reykjavik" (p. 226). Savignac had also fought with Phelps' new agent about trade goods (the tinder that had started the previous summer's "revolution"), and guns were drawn, and Sir George himself was called in to mediate. Apparently little has changed in one year, except that the man Mackenzie claims caused the "revolution," Jorgensen, is no longer on the scene. Why is Savignac never mentioned by Mackenzie? Perhaps because if he'd described this unsavory fellow's actions in 1810, he would have had to change his description of the 1809 "revolution," and not make Jorgensen the sole culprit.

Because of HOLLAND, we have a fuller account of the Mackenzie expedition and a better sense of social and political realities in Reykjavik in 1810. Moreover, it is Holland's contributions to MACKENZIE, particularly the "Preliminary Dissertation" that make that book so important. The adjective signals only that it opens the book; it implies nothing about Holland's abilities in discussing the history and literature of Iceland from the days of settlement up through the 18th century. He had read the Eddas and the key sagas (in contemporary editions with Latin translations), and most of the major scholarship, for he cites authorities that range from the Venerable Bede to Bishop Percy. And he took pains to interview all the best-informed Icelanders. Insights and facts Holland gained from these hours of interviews, usually conducted in Latin, make the sections of his "Dissertation" on contemporary Iceland quite significant. The many readers of MACKENZIE gained information not available, at least in English, anywhere else.

Holland's presentation of precise facts about the prosodic and metaphorical intricacies of Icelandic verse and about the nature and content of the sagas, as well as his speculations about why such a vibrant and rich literary culture grew from such barren soil and why it so rapidly withered away after 1261 are always informed and interesting. He suggests that after the loss of
independence and the strife and struggle it had taken to maintain it, the Icelanders fell into "apathy and indolence" (p. 51). Holland's survey of dreary events in the following centuries is masterful—with wintry summers and volcanic eruptions decimating Icelandic farms, with subsequent famine and pestilence being abetted by pirates, penurious Danish merchants, papist superstitions, all serving to make those middle ages truly dark for the miserable Icelanders. After a useful discussion of the achievements of Icelandic writers and scholars during the 17th and 18th centuries, Holland praises the Danish crown for promoting research on Northern antiquities and thereby encouraging the "progress of knowledge among the Icelanders. ... [To such research] we owe very excellent editions of several of the most important of the early Icelandic writings" (p. 68). It was these editions, as well as those extensive interviews that helped Holland to speak with such self-assurance and clarity. Wawn asserts that the "Preliminary Dissertation" is "arguably the best informed and most influential analytic discussion of Icelandic literary culture written in Britain in the early nineteenth century" (p. 3, and see pp. 35-44).

In the descriptions of the three excursions, Mackenzie did not always borrow from Holland. He speaks authoritatively of Iceland's minerals and of Mount Hekla and its elevation, using measurements Stanley had loaned him for the purposes of comparison. And he quotes from Stanley's papers on hot springs, while adding his own careful observations of the thermal activity (or lack thereof) of the geysirs. Mackenzie also makes a prescient point concerning thermal heat: "No use was made of this hut [near Reykholt] except for the drying of clothes. It is singular that the people have not contrived the means of heating their apartments by the hot springs that are steady in their operations. One would think, that the great scarcity of fuel, and the difficulty of procuring it, would have suggested this long ago. Their not having taken advantage of this natural source of comfort, must proceed from that want of enterprise, which is so conspicuous in the character of the Icelanders" (p. 199). This "want of enterprise" that's somehow stamped on Icelandic "character" becomes a hackneyed motif in these accounts, but the remarks here about the possibilities of tapping thermal heat are new. Mackenzie would be pleased at the enterprise and ingenuity of modern Icelanders in this regard. Another motif is found in his indignant remarks about the poverty of the clergy, and the short-sightedness of the Danish government in not giving them more money: "Their influence over the people, by whom they are highly respected, would, we might suppose, be a sufficient reason for not leaving them to subsist on miserable pittances, hardly sufficient to keep them from starving" (p. 102). So many subsequent writers laud the learning and dedication of Iceland's peasant-priests that the motif becomes a theme.

MACKENZIE quickly went into a second edition; among significant omissions is a passage that expresses approval of Hooker's suggestion that Iceland be "taken possession of and considered a dependency of Britain; this being the only effectual mode of relieving the inhabitants" (p. 339). Since in the second edition Mackenzie makes Jorgensen the scapegoat, he cuts the reference to
Hooker whose narrative of the "revolution" treats Jorgensen favorably. And the first edition's pious reflections about ladies who dance, and the like, with men not their husbands, about a "total disregard to moral character" (p. 95), are likewise omitted. Perhaps Mackenzie realized the book would be widely read, and he toned down or omitted such sanctimonious and personal fulminations.

HENDERSON, 1814-15

Henderson, Ebeneezer. Iceland: or the Journal of a Residence in that Island During the Years 1814 and 1815. Containing Observations on the Natural Phenomena, History, Literature, and Antiquities of the Island; and the Religion, Character, Manners, and Customs of its Inhabitants. 2 vols., Edinburgh: Oliphant, Waugh and Innes; London: Hamilton, Hatchard, and Seeley, 1818, lxi + 377 pp.; vii + 412 pp. Includes three appendixes: 1) On biblical translations and editions, 2) A 90-line ode, "Poem of Thanks from Iceland," by Jón Thorlakson (translator of Milton's Paradise Lost), 3) On the Origins, etc., of Icelandic poetry, a useful survey that includes selections from "Völuspá," "Lodbrok's Death-Song," and a few hundred lines of Thorlakson's translation of Paradise Lost. There was a second edition in 1819, and, based on that, an American abridgement: Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1831, xii+ 252 pp., which omits literary allusions, paraphrases of sermons, and the like, as well as the appendixes. With 15 engravings from sketches by Henderson and Hans Frisack; and a large, fold-out map. The illustrations are "most noteworthy for the perceptions they offer of the everyday life of Icelanders ... showing the manner of dress and traditional work methods, such as the transportation of hay and the cutting of turf" (Ponzi, 19 Old, p. 33). Translated into Icelandic by Snaebjörn Jonsson: Henderson's Ferðabökö. Reykjavik: Snaebjörn Jonsson & Co., 1957. Snaebjörn omits Henderson's historical survey; and in his own useful introduction, he asserts that HENDERSON is the best source for understanding Icelandic life in the early 19th century.

Ebeneezer Henderson (1784-1858) came to Iceland not to gather plants or rocks but to spread the word of God. As an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, he distributed copies of the Scriptures throughout the land. He made it into regions, notably on the east coast and in the northwest, seldom reached by other travellers. He knew Danish well—he had helped translate those Bibles from Danish into Icelandic—and his spoken Icelandic was tolerable, and therefore his observations on the personal lives and problems of Icelandic farmers are unique, and important. And he was the first British traveller to winter in Iceland. Henderson was the Founder of Bible Societies in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, and Russia, and he was the author of 17 books and many theological treatises. An indication of his love for the North is the name he bestowed on his only daughter: "Thulia." She wrote Memoir of the Reverend E. Henderson. London: Knight and Son, 1859.

Henderson recommends Holland's "Dissertation," but for readers who might not have MACKENZIE available, he offers a reliable 60-page historical survey of Iceland and its medieval
literature. What makes this book so important are its fervid descriptions of Iceland's present, of the conditions of its people in 1814 and 1815, as seen through the lens of intense and fundamental religious conviction. Henderson reviles those who "are entirely men of the world. The awful realities of an approaching eternity have made no suitable impression upon their minds" (p. lviii). He encounters them around Reykjavik and at coastal fishing stations, but out in the hinterlands, Henderson finds folk who agree with him about Christian verities. At a very poor farm, Henderson has been kept awake by "the universal scratching that took place in all the beds" (Again, the lice motif). In the morning he "could not but notice the manner in which my hostess spoke of her children. On my inquiring how many children she had, her reply was, 'I have four. Two of them are here with us, and the other two are with God. It is best with those that are with him; and my chief concern about the two that remain is, that they may reach heaven in safety'" (p. 86). The mother's use of the present tense--she still has four children, even though two are dead--demonstrates rock-hard faith, but it is also deeply pathetic, since the mother is more concerned that her children reach heaven than adulthood. And if they had grown up, then the "awful realities" of hell would have become a possibility, so death is the better alternative. Henderson's descriptions of the hovel the family lives in suggest why disease swept children away, but it is chillingly obvious that Henderson agrees with the vision of the devout mother. He would agree that these wretchedly poor people should have proper food and medicine, but he was quick to remind them that "to creatures of a day, any difference of external condition is but of small moment; and that the grand point is to enjoy an interest in the Divine favour [so] that when this short and uncertain life terminates, we shall receive an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away" (p. 86). And so he is proud, sometimes obnoxiously so, that he has come bearing Bibles--passports to that heavenly "inheritance."

He speaks with a preacher about the perennial Icelandic problem, drunkenness, now somewhat abated because liquor has become so expensive. The preacher concludes that, "our poverty is the bulwark of our happiness" (p. 96). Both the preacher and Henderson are pleased that European wars have kept prices high for rum, ignoring the fact that British embargos on Danish shipping also kept wheat and sugar and building materials from reaching Iceland, not to speak of medicine that might have kept those two children "in safety" here below. Henderson is convinced that he has brought these people the one essential nourishment: "the famine they labour under is not so much a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, as a famine for the words of the Lord. Blessed be his name!" (pp. 252-53). His enthusiasms are authentic, and while they offer insights into the mind and motivations of a true believer, far more important are his stark and grim portraits of rural life in Iceland in the early years of the 19th century.

The blasted topography of Iceland also receives graphic representation. He describes lava that is "black as jet; the blisters and cracks are of an immense size; and most of the chasms are completely
glazed, and present the most beautiful and grotesque stalactic appearances. In some places it is spread out in large round cakes, the surface of which is covered with round diminutive elevations, resembling the coils in a roll of tobacco" (p. 150). Images of "cakes" and "tobacco" are precise, and they outweigh "grotesque," a favored adjective in the "sublime" accounts of many travellers. Henderson's fresh descriptions are colored by both his deep religiousity and his abiding scientific curiosity. He plunges a thermometer into a bubbling pool, and he measures the height and interval of its jets, just as Stanley or Mackenzie would have done. But then he wishes that sinners could "be suddenly transported to this burning region, and placed within view of the tremendous operations of this vomiting pool, the sight could not but arouse them from their lethargic stupor" (p. 176). Henderson is curious about the pool's temperature, but he is certain about its portents--its larger significance--and he seems sad that God couldn't have put such powerful reminders of His savage strength more in the way of sinners and doubters. Why couldn't such a pool appear at Picadilly Circus?

Literary historians, those seeking details of how the sagas were cherished and preserved even on the poorest of Iceland's farms, might find HENDERSON useful. Because "excluded from intercourse with foreigners," some residents in the far northwest corner of Iceland are "more tenacious of the traditions which have been delivered to them by their ancestors, ... many of them have learned [the sagas] by heart, and they are almost all capable of expiating on the excellence or turpitude of the leading actions of the story" (p. 104). Near Akureyri, Henderson is very pleased to find a man who "has substituted the reading of the historical books of Scripture for that of the Sagas, which was formerly in universal use, and is still kept up by most of the peasants. ... the Sagas are certainly of great value, and, in the hands of the learned may be turned to good account; but to encourage their perusal by the common people, would only be to nourish those seeds of superstition and credulity which they are but too prone to cultivate" (pp. 87-8). Though understandable, it's ironic that Henderson can tout semitic sagas, while deriding Icelandic ones. Only in HENDERSON are the sagas viewed negatively; in all the other accounts they are judged to be one of Iceland's glories.

There are many memorable passages; I can mention only a few. On the habits of Icelandic animals, e.g., on the fox who masquerades as a sea-gull "with his tail raised so as to resemble one of them ... until he has reached them, when he is sure to seize one of them for his prey" (p. 99). Though borrowed from Olafsson and Pálsson, the fable is transformed by Henderson's breathless naivete; and I can visualize a James Thurber cartoon of the wily fox, tail shaped into a bird profile, backing into an innocent group of self-important sea-gulls. And there's the description of his meeting with Thorlakson, his amazement that such a learned man--the translator of Milton--could do such brilliant work in such a dark hovel. There's the glimpse of an Icelandic family on the move, all their goods strapped to two horses, a long long trek across the interior in front of them. One of their
children, Henderson discovers, has just broken her pelvis in a fall. He fashions for her a make-shift splint, and then the family moves off into a driving rain. (pp. 162-63). And there's another family that had been fined by a district court because their children had composed Nithingavisur upon the parish priest. Therefore, and Henderson's tone is full of approval, they had been "sentenced to be beaten with rods, ... and to stand public penance in the church, as a warning to the congregation" (p. 205). Unfortunately, he has no more to say about this family, nor does he quote any of the verses. At another farmhouse, Henderson is distressed when he finds that that the "eldest daughter [is] to assist me in pulling off my pantaloons and stockings, ... she maintained it was the custom of the country, and their duty to help the weary traveller" (p. 114). This vignette occurs in other accounts; see MORRIS, and it inspired a dust jacket illustration for an anthology of travel writing (See Grímsson). Henderson wintered in Reykjavík, and though there were only a few hundred people dwelling there, for him it was an urban pit of Godlessness: "The foreign residents generally idle away the short-lived day with the tobacco pipe in their mouths, and spend the evening in playing at cards, and drinking punch. They have two or three balls in the course of the winter, and a play is sometimes acted by the principal inhabitants. ... An instance has even been known of the same individual, who performed one of the acts in a play till late on Saturday night, making his appearance the following morning in the pulpit, in the character of a public teacher of religion!" (pp. 376-77)

Henderson's indignation is thick enough to slice, but it doesn't blur the wit in the suggestion that the minister was still acting on Sunday morning ("in the character of..."). I suspect that the high society of Reykjavík invited Henderson to one of their gatherings only once. He's a stern and formidable man, one who warms to human nature most when he can share discussions that focus on man's depravity.

Many subsequent travellers read HENDERSON. Burton appreciated the sharpness and vigor of Henderson's representations of farmsteads and lava-wastes, even as he laughed at his sermonettes. Like his prose, Henderson was himself hardy and intrepid, forceful and optimistic. He was full of wonder at God's world and His word, joyful and proud that he has been made the instrument for spreading the latter across a land where he could see such startling examples of the former, of Nature, God's second book.
Snaefellsnesjökull. These are among some of the best 19th-century paintings of Iceland I've ever seen, and all Icelandophiles must be pleased that Atkinson's journals and illustrations have finally been published, 155 years after the young naturalist had brought them together into volumes he intended for private circulation.

George Clayton Atkinson (1808-1877) was not a member of the gentry (as were Banks, Hooker, Stanley, and Mackenzie), but he did belong to a commercial aristocracy in the north of England. So he had the money and time to pursue his avocation; he became a well-known naturalist, a founding member of the Natural History Society of Northumberland and Durham, and he published reports in its Transactions. Toward the end of his life he conducted a survey of damage done to trees by industrial pollution, thus becoming a pioneer environmentalist. A companion on this trip, William Proctor, returned to Iceland to search out more birds. He ended up becoming a famous ornithologist, and selections from his journals--no longer extant--appear in BARING-GOULD.

Atkinson's journal is rich with descriptions of Iceland's birds. But it is also important for his report of an afternoon he spent in Glasgow with Hooker. Just before embarking, Atkinson introduced himself to the aging scholar, who generously gave him advice about collecting and then regaled him with stories about his own summer in Iceland, and particularly his memories of Banks and Jorgenson, whom Hooker called an "extraordinary fellow," who on the voyage out "managed everything, busying himself at his leisure, in writing and arranging the plans of his future operations. [A few days after arriving in Reykjavik, Jorgensen] took a strong boat's crew armed, rowed ashore and taking the Governor by surprise at his house, seized him and sent him on board Phelps' vessel. He then took possession of his papers, established himself in his house, and discharged in every respect and with much fairness and assiduity, the duties of Governor" (pp. 9-10). Atkinson's recollections add new material to the record, e.g., by suggesting that Banks knew beforehand what Jorgenson might do and that he'd warned Hooker, who said that the "extraordinary fellow" had worked on plans on the voyage out, plans that we must assume had to with the "revolution." And it seems significant that Hooker was still convinced, 24 years later, that Jorgenson had been wronged, and that he was able to likewise convince the young Atkinson.

Atkinson, as had the diarists on the Stanley expedition, makes invidious comparisons between sober and clean Faroese and drunken and filthy Icelanders, but he goes a step further to wonder why the Danes restricted the sale of liquor in the Faroes and not in Iceland. And with glimpses of pastors who have a jar of grog next to the altar, of drunks reeling down the few streets of Reykjavik during the Handels-tid, the motif of drunken Icelanders is deepened. Concerning the sulphur mountains and steaming vents that drew from Mackenzie such horrific adjectives and that caused Henderson to remark on God's powers and the hell-fire that He had created for sinners, Atkinson says that the bubbling mud reminds him of "hasty pudding" (p. 110). And at the Geysirs, where the rhetoric is often as hot and gushing as the springs being described, Atkinson chooses to be playful: "anyone
who holds in due estimation the comforts of a really close shave should go to the Geysirs. One uncommonly nice little boiler presents itself to stick his razor in; another beautifully contrived one for his soap" (p. 138). He saves his descriptive zeal for exotic creatures like the Red-Necked Phalarope. The depictions of Icelandic birds and Hooker's recollections of Jorgensen, as well as the magnificent paintings--these are the most striking and memorable parts of ATKINSON.

**Barrow, John.** *A Visit to Iceland, by Way of Tronyem, in the "Flower of Yarrow" Yacht in the Summer of 1834.* London: John Murray, 1835, xxiv + 320 pp. Includes extracts from WRIGHT and BENNERS, descriptions of their ascent of Snaefelsnesjökull, as well as a letter from Stanley extolling that glacier, hoping that future travellers would visit it rather than Hekla. Includes also two extracts from HOLLAND: on churches and on the volcanic origins of obsidian, all published here for the first time. A concluding chapter, "Statistics," is made up of the answers to questions the London Statistical Society had given Barrow, and so it equals a small repository of facts and figures about rents, deaths, births, diet, ardent spirits, education, and the like. With nine illustrations, five of them of Icelandic scenes, including two engravings based on drawings by Stanley: the Basaltic Caves at Stappen and Snaefelsnesjökul. There are also black and white plates of Reykjavík, the Great Geysir, and Hekla--all taken from sketches by the author. John Barrow (1808-1898), an Alpinist and explorer-adventurer, wrote *Excursions in the North of Europe* and the *Life of Sir Francis Drake*. He was the son of the founder of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir John Barrow (1764-1848), and his father's connections helped him gain access to the Stanley and Holland materials mentioned above.


**BARROW** and **DILLON** have much in common. Their descriptions of Icelanders continue and strengthen negative stereotypes, with Barrow saying that "the Icelander is not a very active person, and our guides fully participated in the general character of the country, which is that of a want of energy and bodily exertion" (p. 134). Dillon also remarks on Icelanders' "dilatory habits [and] ... their manners, many of which are very disgusting; such as transferring milk from one bottle to another through the medium of their mouths" (pp. 133-34). (See WRIGHT for a similar description.) Their representations of lava-scapes tend toward the "sublime," with Dillon asserting that "the mind can hardly form a more terrible picture of a tract of country over which the arm of a destroying angel has been stretched. A deathlike silence reigns on all sides, only occasionally broken by the shrill note of the golden plover" (p. 16). Barrow call the Geysirs "this grand exhibition of nature" (p. 195) and he reflects that Banks and Stanley had stood in reverie here. He takes pride in being part of a select fraternity who had made the Geysirs a kind of Grail. Like those earlier
travellers, Barrow and Dillon fulfilled their quests aboard sailboats. Soon the steamboat would transform that small fraternity of travellers into hordes of tourists.

Both meet Prince Frederick of Denmark who was travelling in Iceland during the summer of 1834. Barrow was impressed with the work of Frederick Kloss, an artist in the prince's retinue, asserting that a Kloss picture of the Geysir was the best he'd ever seen. (See Ponzi, 19 Old, pp. 55, 136, for Kloss's renderings of the Geysir.) Barrow urged the Prince, upon assuming the crown, to raise the salaries of Iceland's preachers. Dillon also praises the Icelandic clergy and their commitment both to learning and their poor parishioners. Most of these British visitors came to realize that the preachers did hold things together in rural areas, making available the traditions that lived in the books they insisted their flocks learn to read. And during all those bad stretches of hunger and sickness, during summers when the warmth didn't come and lambs and babies didn't live to see a second summer, the clergymen were there with solace and help.

There are fresh details in both books. Barrow tells us that there were four jetties extending out into Reykjavik's harbour and that several vessels drawn up on the beach "were the strongest-built boats I have ever seen in any part of the world" (p. 103). He remarks on the slovenly conditions of the Latin School at Bessastadir (it did, however, produce those praise-worthy preachers), and he describes several wretched hovels between shore-front warehouses and the public cemetery, with "not a stone nor a block of wood being anywhere raised to the memory of the departed" (p. 106). Because Dillon spent the winter in Reykjavik, he provides glimpses of the capitol that are unusual, of, for instance, a steady diet of cod-fish "without any sauce but the water it was boiled in" (p. 80). He also mentions an interminable card game, the violent winds that keep folk indoors, and his pleasure at discovering the 3,000 volume library up in the eaves of the cathedral (the nucleus of today's Lansbókasafn). In late October, according to Dillon, people begin looking for the yearly postal boat from Copenhagen, "the most welcome that reaches their shores" (p. 161). It didn't arrive until mid-November, and it had been seven weeks in transit. Soon steamships would be making the passage in as many days.

CHAMBERS, DUFFERIN, 1855-56

Chambers, Robert. Tracings of Iceland and the Faroe Islands. London and Edinburgh: W. and R. Chambers, 1856, v + 85 pp. With two illustrations, one of Reykjavik and the other of the Great Geysir; and two maps, one of the Faroes, the other of southwest Iceland. Robert Chambers (1802-1871) wrote many books on Scottish lore. He was also the founder and owner of the renowned Chambers Journal, as well as the Chambers publishing house in Edinburgh, the firm that brought out the New Edition of MACKENZIE in 1842, and in 1851.

Chambers represents a new breed of traveller--the tourist--because he arrived in Iceland aboard the steamship "Thor," a post-packet on its initial run between Copenhagen and Reykjavik; it made
eight such runs a season, usually laying over in Reykjavík for five days. Therefore Chambers and his companions had to make the most of their time, and this narrative celebrates and describes "five days of exposure and exertion" (p. 80). They attended a ball in Reykjavík and visited the cathedral, with its Thorvaldsen baptismal font and the library up under the eaves that had sustained Dillon during his long winter in Reykjavík. They also visited the Latin School, now moved to Reykjavík from Bessastadir; in one of its upper rooms a fledgling Althing was then in session. Because Icelandic politicians pushing for independence remind him of Irish ones, Chambers is unsympathetic. Though he is impressed with all the publishing activity in the small capitol, he regrets the radical cast of both newspapers, the Ingólf and the Thiodólfur, their reputed "violent malcontent complexion" (p. 40). Judging from a long anecdote Chambers tells about Jorgensen freeing a condemned man because he could make up a fourth at whist (p. 82), the "revolution" of 1809 seems to be entering the realms of legend. Jorgensen's "revolution" was given fuller and more factual coverage in Dillon, but there it was characterized, typically, as a "laughable occurrence" (p. 68).

Because he's an "inelastic" middle-aged non-equestrian, Chambers is apprehensive when they set out on their trek to the Geysirs via Thingvallileir, but his fears quickly disappear. "It was a wonderfully rough, novel, hilarious, exciting affair after all" (p 48). His enthusiasm is appealing, and so is his wry awareness of what previous writers had said of Iceland's scenery: "there was ... neither beautiful scenery, nor sublime scenery, nor good honest serviceable scenery ... It was literally one unvaried scene of iron country" (p. 48). On their way out to the Geysirs, Chambers and his merry band of fellow vacationers slept in the small church at Thingvellir, thus setting a pattern for scores of subsequent tourists.

Dufferin and Ava, Frederick Temple Hamilton-Temple Blackwood. Letters from High Latitudes, being some account of a Voyage in the Schooner Yacht "Foam" to Iceland, Jan Mayen, and Spitzbergen in 1856. London: John Murray, 1857, xvii + 425 pp. Second and third editions also appeared in 1857; a fourth in 1858; a fifth in 1867; a sixth in 1873; two sevenths, one in 1879 and another in 1873; an eighth in 1887; a ninth in 1891; a tenth in 1895; an eleventh in 1903, which was reprinted in 1913. An Oxford University Press Edition, # 155 in the World's Classics Series, with an introduction by R.W. Macan, appeared in 1910 and was reprinted in 1924 and 1934. The Dent and Dutton Everyman Edition appeared in 1910 and was reprinted in 1925 and 1940; it includes an introduction by Jon Steffansson. A Merlin Press Edition published in London in 1990 includes an introduction by Iceland's President, Vigdis Finnbogadottir. American and Canadian editions use the title A Yacht Voyage, Letters from High Latitudes, and there have been at least 12 of those. Appendixes--which vary in different editions--include selections from the log of "Reine Hortense," the French Corvette that towed Dufferin's schooner northward into the pack-ice off Jan Mayen, as well as "Thermometrical Observations," and Maps of Ocean Currents, and the track of the "Foam." With 25 black and white illustrations, the most striking of which show the "Foam" at sea with
icebergs or storm clouds as portentous backdrops. The engraving, "An Icelandic Lady," is pirated from Mayer. Dufferin had "his own cumbersome photographic equipment (and his own photographer) to supplement his sketches. We do not know the whereabouts of those early photographs--surely the first ever taken in Iceland" (Ponzi, 19 Old, p. 21). Translated into Icelandic by Hersteinn Pálsson: Ferdabók Dufferins lavardar. Reykjavík: Bókafellsútgáfana, 1944. Includes a useful two-page introduction as well as photographs, probably taken after 1856, of the chief dignitaries--the Rector, the Bishop, the Governor, the Chief Justice and the Doctor--present at a formal dinner given for Dufferin. Their stern visages in these yellowing photos do not square with Dufferin's descriptions of these convivial worthies at the five-hour feast, with its "Scandinavian skoal-drinking."

Lord Dufferin (1826-1902), born into the Irish nobility, a brilliant orator and writer, became an accomplished politician and diplomat; he served the Crown in many parts of the world: as Under Secretary to India, as the Governor-General of Canada from 1872 to 1878. He once welcomed some emigre Icelanders settling in near Lake Winnipeg, telling them that "no race has a better right to come amongst us than you, for the world is indebted to you for the discovery of this continent." As a young man when he sailed the "Foam" through northern seas into very high latitudes, he was as dashing and brave as the vikings he extolled in this narrative of his voyage.

Indicating the spirit in which this narrative (ostensibly 13 letters to his mother) should be read, an opening list of Dramatis Personae includes a goat, a cock (subject of a funny anecdote), an Icelandic fox, and a white bear. Letters five through seven depict Icelandic scenes and events, including that standard trip to Thingvellir and the Geysirs; the later letters are padded with excerpts from Thorpe's translations of Eddic poems and Laing's of the Heimskringla, but Dufferin undercut hackneyed, romantic bromides, e.g. of the "noble Northmen" with that "love of liberty innate in the race" (p. 22), with some refreshingly ironic comparisons of pillaging 10th century vikings and unscrupulous 19th century capitalists. Regarding modern Icelanders, however, living in pastoral and "patriarchal simplicity" (p. 30), Dufferin uses a recurring motif that taps into romanticized assumptions about the "other" that have been part of the foreign observer's kit since Tacitus chastized his Roman audience with examples of the virtues of the ancient Britons.

Dufferin's descriptions of Icelandic landscape follow no previous traditions; they are somehow both precise and baroque: "As you approach the shore, you are very much reminded of Scotland, except that everything is more intense, the atmosphere clearer, the light more vivid, the air more bracing, the hills steeper, loftier, more tormented, as the French say, and more gaunt" (p. 23). Of Almannagjá: "The perpendicular walls of rock rose on either hand from the flat green sward that carpeted its bottom, pretty much as the waters of the Red Sea must have risen on each side of the fugitive Israelites" (p. 67). Of the plain and lake: "In the foreground lay huge mases of rock and lava, tossed about like the ruins of a world, and washed by waters as bright and green as polished
malachite. Beyond, a bevy of distant mountains, robed by the transparent atmosphere in tints unknown to Europe, peeped over each other's shoulders into the silver mirror at their feet" (p. 68). And then, just to keep us off balance, Dufferin presents a scathingly funny portrait of a German naturalist who is an expert on gnats. Surrealistic descriptions of befuddled drinkers on an early morning adventure with winged rabbits; bemused accounts of a "languid" three-day wait for the Geysir to perform, broken up by card games and the arrival of Prince Napoleon, for whom Dufferin prepares a plover picnic--these are only a few of the many passages that make this book a delight to read. It is no wonder that DUFFERIN became an obligatory item in the baggage of all subsequent visitors to Iceland.

FORBES, METCALFE, HOLLAND, BARING-GOULD, SYMINGTON, CLIFFORD, SHERIFF, ANDERSON, 1860-63

Forbes, Charles S. *Iceland: Its Volcanoes, Geysers, and Glaciers.* London: John Murray, 1860, ix + 335 pp. With 23 illustrations. The one on the title page depicts Forbes' shirt, in which he'd wrapped meat to be cooked, atop a spouting geysir. At least three of the other illustrations are borrowed, via engravings in British periodicals, from the drawings Mayer made on the 1836 French expedition. They are "The Vestibule, Surtshellir," "Crossing the Bruará," and "The Icelandic Home," numbers 21, 39, and 131 in the recent Orn and Orlygur edition (See Mayer). The last of these, "Kvöldvaka í koti nálaegt Reykjavík," shows a paterfamilias reading a saga to a rapt audience. Even more romanticized is the tableau in August Schiott's oil painting, "Kvöldvaka." (See Ponzi, 19 old, p. 91). The scene became an icon, one familiar to many British travellers; see BARING-GOULD and OSWALD.

Metcalfe, Frederick. *The Oxonian in Iceland: or, Notes of Travel in that Island in the Summer of 1860. With Glances at Icelandic Folklore and Sagas.* London: Longman, Green, 1861, vii + 424 pp. Cheap Edition. London: John Camden Hotten, 1867. Reprinted. New York: AMS Press, 1967. An appendix includes an article, "The Volcano of Kotuglia." It had erupted in July of 1860, while Metcalfe was on his trek. With a fold-out map and four black and white illustrations: of Almannagjá, of the Geysirs, of Godafoss, and--this an atypical illustration--of Grettistak, a large "rhomboidal stone ... poised upon another" and found near Hrutafjord. Frederick Metcalfe (1815-1885), a scholar of Scandinavian literature, was a don at Oxford and twice a candidate for the professorship in Anglo-Saxon there. He wrote many scholarly articles and other travel books that took the Oxonian to Norway, to Telemarken, and the like. He was the author of *The Englishman and the Scandinavian; Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Literature,* 1880.

Symington, Andrew James. Pen and Pencil Sketches of Faroe and Iceland. London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862, vi + 315 pp. With 51 small engravings, taken from sketches by the author, but with several from Mayer, e.g., the Icelandic lady in bridal dress, the crossing of the Brúará, and scenes at Thingvellir. But the iconic interior is not included.

Baring-Gould, Sabine. Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1863, xlvii + 447 pp. Includes five appendixes: A is an article, "Ornithology of Iceland," by Alfred Newton; B is "Advice for Sportsmen"; C is a list of plants; D a complete list of published sagas; E, "Expenses of My Tour in Iceland," itemizes all expenditures, including equipment bought in London, train and boat fares, etc., from 7 June to 9 August. The total is 100 pounds, 16 shillings. With 16 plates, several in color, and 20 smaller illustrations, all taken from sketches by the author. Plate one includes two excellent "panoramic" views of Thingvellir and of the southern coast. Sabine Baring-Gould (1834-1924) was a well-known Victorian High Churchman who wrote voluminously on many subjects. Perhaps most famous for his Lives of the Saints (15 vols.), he also published dozens of books on history and folk-lore; he wrote many novels and 24 books on travel, the first of which--this one on Iceland--he judged the best of the lot. And he also published a translation of Grettis Saga.

[Clifford, Charles] Travels by 'Umbra'. Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1865, vi + 279 pp. Also titled, A Tour Twenty Years Ago by Umbra. London: Privately printed, 1863. [The tour occurred in 1862] Charles Clifford (1819-1880), or Charles Hugh Cavendish Clifford, the 8th Baron Clifford of Chudleigh, was also an M.P. for the Isle of Wight and a friend of Dasent.

Shepherd, C.W. The North-West Peninsula of Iceland: Being the Journal of a Tour in Iceland in the Spring and Summer of 1862. London: Longmans, Green, 1867, vii + 162 pp. With map and two color plates, of Isafjordur and Godafoss, taken from sketches drawn on the spot by G.G. Fowler. Translated into Icelandic by Steindor Steindorsson: C.W. Shepherd. Islandsferd 1862. Akureyri: Bókaforlag Odds Björnssonar, 1972. In a short Eftirmáli Steindor asserts that Shepherd offers portraits of 19th century personalities available nowhere else, and he quotes a contemporary annalist on how unusually cold it was during the summer of 1862. C.W. Shepherd, an Oxford don and a Fellow of the Zoological Society, had done some hiking and exploring in Iceland the previous summer, when he was one of a party (See E.T. HOLLAND) that attempted the first ascent of Oraefajökull, the highest elevation in Iceland. That glacier was not climbed until 1891; see HOWELL.

sketches made by Anderson. Those of Gullfoss and "Ferjad yfir Thjórsá" as well as "Reyjavíkur í vestri" are particularly fine. Sir Charles Anderson (1804-1894) received his M.A. from Oxford in 1829, and, upon the death of his father, his baronetcy in 1846. He dabbled in law and archaeology in Lincolnshire, and travelled widely.

British tourists ventured out to Iceland in considerable numbers during the middle decades of the century. Many of them came aboard the Danish steamer, "Arcturus," which had accomodations for 26 passengers, and laid over for one week in Iceland. Those interested in only the standard tour, and perhaps some fishing and shooting as well, stayed just those few days, returning with the steamer on its next transit, along with a cargo of 60 to 70 Icelandic ponies destined to work in coal mines in Britain. Of the above eight travellers, however, only one--Symington--returned on the very next leg, after making the predictable trip to the Geysirs. The Anderson party, in Iceland for one month, also went to the Geysirs, making an unusual side-excursion to Gullfoss. Metcalfe, Baring-Gould and Clifford were interested in saga sites, and they planned their itineraries accordingly. Holland and Shepherd were serious climbers and explorers. What follows is an attempt to give some sense of the activities of these visitors, and of what they saw in Iceland or thought worth reporting.

Forbes' fellow-passengers hurried off on that standard trip to the Geysirs, but he headed north and west, traversing some parts of Snaefelfnes that Britishers hadn't visited for fifty years, covering 800 miles in 30 days. Noting the French fishermen in Breithaford, he reports that "this year there are 269 French vessels engaged ... with crews amounting in all to 7000 fishermen" (p. 208). Since these men are all prime candidates for the French navy, France will have the edge in any future hostilities with England. His readers are warned, asked whether the British shouldn't send more trawlers North. The ever-serious and patriotic Forbes is also worried by rumors that the French are interested in Icelandic sulphur deposits. Forbes mentions the abiding problem of alcoholism, but rather than laughing at or recoiling in disgust from slobbering Icelanders, he indicts the greed of the Danish traders, who "having first robbed their customers of their senses, relieve them of their produce" (p. 312). Forbes also has straight-forward descriptions of poverty and sickness, of the smelly and dark and airless inner-sanctums of Icelandic farm houses. But in a discussion of the importance of the sagas, he claims that for the poor farmers the old tales become "their chief source of recreation on their long winter evenings, when, clustered round a dim oil-lamp, one of the family reads aloud, and the remainder spin, knit, and weave" (p. 306). I suspect that Forbes added this claim to correspond with the pirated Mayer illustration included with his text.

In direct contrast, and I think with Forbes in mind, Baring-Gould says that "in it [the badstofa] is spent the long dark winter, with no fire, and each inmate kept warm by animal heat alone. The stifling foulness of the atmosphere can hardly be conceived, and, indeed, it is quite unendurable to English lungs. Gaimard, in his great work, [Mayer was the artist] gave two highly imaginative, but utterly inaccurate, representations of Icelandic interiors, with natives seated around a blazing hearth,
reading sagas or playing the langspiel, a national instrument, and these illustrations have been, most
unfortunately, reproduced in some English tourists' volumes" (p. 60). Baring-Gould is unrelentingly
specific here, and his descriptions square with those of other travellers. We can therefore understand
why so many of them declined farmers' invitations to join them in their badstofas, choosing instead
to sleep in the small district churches or in their own tents, however difficult it might have been to set
them up in the dark, or in bad weather. There were tourists, however, who believed in the tableau of
the reading paterfamilias, one so much so that she created such a room and put herself among the
rapt audience; see OSWALD.

Though Baring-Gould knew and admired Dasent's edition of Njåla, most of the saga sites he
visits are associated with Grettir, and his narrative is laced with long quotations from the saga, which
he was then translating. That Baring-Gould was an accomplished artist is suggested in his painterly
descriptions of Icelandic land and cloud-scapes. His narrative is also laced with wit. Rather than add
to the many representations of Thingvellir--he suggests that his would have been "the sixteenth such
description existing in print" (p. 71)--he offers fresh depictions of new marvels, e.g., of Dettifoss, a
great waterfall in the north, one so far off the beaten track that few tourists visited it: "The white
writhing vortex below, with now and then an ice-green wave tearing through the foam, to lash against
the walls; the thunder and bellowing of the water, which make the rock shudder underfoot, are all
stamped on my mind with a vividness which it will take years to efface" (p. 217). This prose is quite
effective, its images suggesting the power of the plunging water. Alongside the description is an
engraving of his sketch of the Falls, two very small human figures on a high ledge showing how
immense is Dettifoss.

Metcalfe, the Oxford don, also knew the sagas well, and he penetrated into the interior and
along the northern coast, covering over 1500 miles in 56 days. Many British readers would
appreciate his lusty descriptions of saga heroes and their terrain, as well as his suggestions that they
were all members of this same "Scandinavian breed" (p. 70). Metcalfe adds a powerful vignette to
the tradition of the learned Icelandic peasant, when he meets a 60-year old farmer, bent and dirty,
who became "quite a different being, all life and animation, the moment he got among his books, ...
His wrinkled face was flushed, and his eye lit up with a new lustre, and he gave a strange look of
conscious pride and humility mixed--'What is it to be then?' he asked. 'From Grettisaga,' replied I,
'there, where he is murdered,' holding the book in my hand to verify his accuracy. Off the old fellow
started, reciting the very words of the saga with extreme volubility" (p. 185). Metcalfe tries him on
several other sagas, and always the old man's memory serves him perfectly. At such moments
Metcalfe is good, but his learned disquisitions about human fate and his attempts at droll humor, as
when he suggests a connection between the hero of Laxdoela and the Bodley at Oxford, are tiresome.
In a burst of Tory vitriol, as he discusses Icelandic journalism, Metcalfe laments "the old passion for
liberty evaporating in petty mimicry of independence, frittering itself away in newspaper polemics"
Those radical newspapers commented upon in CHAMBERS are evidently having some effect, if even our Oxonian notices them. Moreover, what he calls a "petty mimicry of independence" will soon lead to a form of Home Rule.

Umbra and party also visit famous saga sites, mainly in the south, as well as Thingvellir and the Geysirs; many of the descriptions are precise and evocative, but the intention here is to spoof tourists, travel writers, and British saga enthusiasts, among whom is their own "Mr. Darwin." He had written a book on Northern Antiquities and received, according to Umbra, the Order of the Walrus, second class, and often thought himself a viking reborn. For readers who knew that Darwin was Dasent, all this must have been amusing, especially when another member of the party falls asleep with the famed edition of Njála in his lap. Despite the heavy-handed and "jolly" nature of some of the jokes, sometimes the satire still bites, since there are still romantics among us. And Umbra's heated description of a lava waste invites us to recall the excesses of "sublime" rhetoric: "What a fearful valley! ... On all sides horror! horror! horror! The thought winged its way to the time when it was a tossing liquid sea, glaring with baleful light, and exhaling dreadful fumes" (p. 32). This passage could be dropped into MACKENZIE, and few readers would think it out of place.

Holland and Shepherd stand apart in this group as serious mountaineers, eager to conquer virgin peaks. Holland attempted the highest prominence in Iceland, Orafajökull, and here he reports on that exciting but failed venture. Shepherd had been along on that trek in 1861. The following summer he led a party of climbers and ornithologists into the Northwest Peninsula, entering regions no Britisher had visited before. (But they often crossed the tracks of Henderson, who'd been there 50 years earlier). Shepherd's account of their ascent (the first) of Drangajökull is low-key, and dramatic. He also offers many crisp observations of Icelandic life, e.g., of a night spent in a farmhouse: "The room overhead was filled with sick people, and the coughing, sneezing, clearing of throats, and other uncouth noises were incessant. ... We mixed a large jug-ful of strong salvolatile and water, with a dash of nitre in it. Gislason took it up, and stood by while the bowl was passed round and round till it was emptied. It ought to be said that most of the patients slept quietly after it" (p. 17). This vignette only suggests the cruel conditions in those farmhouses, with families crowded together in wet and dark rooms, with sickness and disease flourishing.

Because Shepherd and his group were serious birders and explorers, they were not too interested in the marvels on the orthodox tour. On their way back down to Reykjavik, they did stop briefly at the Geysirs and at Thingvellir, where they "met 'Umbra' with his accompanying shades, gliding through the land. One of them blew a horn as we passed" (p. 162). References to fellow British travellers will become more common in these accounts; they're often interesting, but--like this one--too brief or enigmatic.

MORRIS, BRYCE, BURTON, 1871-73

William Morris (1834-1896) won international fame as a man of letters, as a designer, and as a founder of British socialism. And in all three areas his achievements are still studied and celebrated. Less well-known are his connections to Iceland. From his days at Oxford in the 1850's, when he exulted over the Eddas, to his work in the 1880's for famine relief in the north of Iceland, the country, its literary culture, its people and their problems, were never far from his mind. With Eiríkr Magnússon as his tutor and collaborator, he had begun learning Icelandic and translating sagas in 1868. A dozen of the family sagas, all of the *Heimskringla,* and most of the *Elder Edda,* survive in Morris's archaic brand of English. A list of his works with Icelandic themes runs to dozens of titles, including poems and prose tales, even socialist lectures. His epic, *Sigurd the Volsung,* was carried along to Iceland by a future traveller; see OSWALD. His lyric poem, "Iceland First Seen," was translated into Icelandic in 1872; see Thorsteinsson. It was probably known to more Icelanders than the original was to British readers.

Bryce, James. "Impressions of Iceland (1872)," *Memories of Travel,* London and New York: MacMillan, 1923, pp. 1-43. With an "Appendix to Chapter on Iceland," pp. 297-301, by C.P. Ilbert, one of two companions on the journey. Reprinted from *The Cornhill Magazine* (1874): 553-70. James Bryce (1838-1922) won all the glittering prizes at Oxford and became a well-known jurist, historian, and politician, serving in the House of Commons, as a Cabinet Minister, and for six years (1907-13) as the British Ambassador to the United States. He wrote many books, he was a founder of the League of Nations, and he was an avid mountaineer—a hobby that attracted him to Iceland and Mt. Hekla. Though he only spent two months in Iceland, he learned the language and became an aficionado of the sagas.

Button, Richard F. *Ultima Thule: or A Summer in Iceland.* With Historical Introduction, Maps and Illustrations, 2 vols., London: William P. Nimmo, 1875, xix + 380, vi + 408 pp. Includes appendixes on Sulphur—in Iceland, in Sicily, in Transylvania, and elsewhere. With maps and several illustrations, many of them engravings from photographs. The frontispiece is of Reykjavík; another has a tendentious title: "Hafnafjord, which Ought to be the Capital of Iceland." Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890), in between Foreign Office postings to more exotic climes, was hired by a British firm to look into sulphur mining possibilities in Iceland, and this massive (the introduction runs to 265
pages) and important book, one of dozens the explorer-adventurer somehow found time to write, records events on his 1872 journey. He returned in 1875, but the record of that trip, "Iceland Revisited," was never published. Burton spoke many languages, but Icelandic was not among them. His most well-known works are the 3-volume narrative of his pilgrimage to Medina, and his translations of Arabian tales in a Book of a 1001 Nights (15 volumes).

These three form a logical category not only in that they travelled to Iceland in the early 70's, but also because they were such important and weighty figures in Victorian England and indeed in the wider world. They were all prolific writers, and they all had international reputations for endeavors other than writing: Morris as designer and socialist, Bryce as cabinet minister and diplomat, Burton as explorer and Orientalist. Their accounts of their travels in Iceland are engaging, and they indicate a deeper understanding of Iceland than we find in the majority of reports from the second half of the 19th century. Furthermore, all three remained conscious of problems Iceland faced, and even though what support they offered was minimal (speaking out in the press, collecting funds for famine relief), it did Iceland no harm to have such friends at the highest levels of British public life.

When Morris first went to Iceland in 1871, he was not the sort of ignorant tourist that Holland had castigated, one eager to see all the "correct" attractions in the shortest possible time. Morris was in fact quite contemptuous of such tourists, who joined what Burton labeled "Cockney excursions" that rushed off to see the great Geysir; Morris even admits that he feels some shame when his party stops there, at this "place sacred principally to Mangnall" (p. 74). [Mangnall was the author of children's books that highlighted geographical wonders around the world] But there were places in Iceland "sacred" to Morris, none more so than Thingvellir, and his description of that sunken plain is memorable, and moving: "My heart beats, so please you, as we near the brow of the pass, and all the infinite wonder which came upon me when I came up on the deck of the Diana to see Iceland for the first time, comes on me again now, for this is the heart of Iceland that we are going to see, nor was the reality of the sight unworthy." After a careful description of plain, lake, streams and rifts, Morris says that "Once again that thin thread of insight and imagination, which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it comes, did not fail me at this first sight of the greatest marvel and most storied place in Iceland" (p. 168). Contemplating the bleak landscape and poor farm at Hrutstead, Morris says: "Just think, though, what a mournful place this is ... how every place and name marks the death of its short-lived eagerness and glory; and withal so little is the life changed in some ways: Olaf Peacock went about summer and winter after his livestock, and saw to his haymaking and fishing just as the little peak-nosed parson does ... But Lord! What littleness and helplessness has taken the place of the old passion and violence that had place here once—and all is unforgotten" (p. 108). Morris is disturbed by disjunctions between 11th century and 19th century Iceland, or between his former ideas about medieval Iceland, drawn from the sagas, and his new ones, based on first-hand observation of Iceland's
meager "littleness." I find such passages evocative and important. They've helped me to understand Morris and his ambiguous fix on the unique power of the sagas. In the 1970's, on foot and on horseback, I followed the same track Morris and his party used between Reykholt and Thingvellir. And I had Morris's Journals along. As Morris recognized scenes that saga writers had described, he felt an excitement of identification. So did I, but mine was double-barrelled, for I could feel both the association with scenes from the sagas and also with William Morris. That "thin thread of insight and imagination" attained new meaning; see Abo.

Bryce and Burton were both in Iceland the summer of 1872; their paths didn't cross, but they visited some of the same places. And they both attained the summit of Hekla. Bryce says little about it; Burton scorns all previous writers who'd suggested the climb was arduous or dangerous. Bryce started his trek in the Northeast, at Seythisfjord, and rode across a section of the interior desert rarely traversed, even by the natives. He comments on its "strange, stern beauty, stilling the soul with the stillness of nature" (p. 18). He captures the squalor and smells of a typical farmhouse, but then he says that there are "three things no Icelandic farm wants--books, a coffee-pot, and a portrait of Jón Sigurðsson, the illustrious leader of the patriotic party" (p. 29). And he makes a memorable comment about the poor in Iceland and in Britain, where, whether among the "poorest cottagers in Ireland" or the "lowest parts of Liverpool," there's a correspondence between physical squalor and the "ignorance and spiritless abasement of the people, ... whereas in Iceland the contrast between the man and the house he lives in is the strongest possible" (p. 29). Bryce suggests that an Icelander's "ease and independence of manner" stem from his knowledge of the sagas, which have "stimulated his imagination, and added to his people and his country a sort of historical dignity which their position in the modern world could never entitle them to" (p. 30). He goes on to gauge the influence of the Latin School in Reykjavik, particularly through the priests "whom it trains and scatters forth ... [the school has also] given a great stimulus to literary activity, has created a strong and united national party whose efforts have extracted from Denmark the repeal of the old oppressive laws and forced her at last in this very spring (1872) to grant a constitution." Its teachers have written books, edited and printed others, made maps and surveys, and "their presence gives Reykjavik society a learned and literary character, which is the last thing you would look for in such a clutter of wooden shanties" (p. 37). Such mixtures of sharp description and canny generalization are thick in Bryce's short memoir.

Burton reminds his British readers that "we have all read in childhood about those 'Wonders of the World,' Hekla and the Geysir." Early travellers described "scenes of thrilling horror, of majestic grandeur, and of heavenly beauty, where our more critical, perhaps more cultivated, taste finds very humble features. They had 'Iceland on the Brain,' and they were wise in their generation." (pp. ix-x). Burton seems arrogant here, but the dangers he faced on treks in Arabia and Africa would make Iceland bland by comparison. And it's true that many travellers, influenced by diction drawn from the "sublime," did exaggerate Iceland's geophysical features. Burton also
waxes scornful concerning those British travellers who brag about their racial affinities with Icelanders, the viking blood and "pluck" they share, while conveniently forgetting the Irish slaves who made up a large percentage of the original population.

Burton's depictions of Iceland's poverty are stark and sharp, and his suggestions for ways that Iceland might overcome that poverty, either through expanding the fisheries or encouraging immigration, are specific and logical, and sometimes humorous, as when he suggests that some "sturdy idlers" be sent to "Milwaukee, where they could learn industry from a Yankee taskmaster" (II, p. 288). Burton eschews stock and hackneyed responses, and his long introduction is heavily-freighted with learned, but often entertaining, disquisitions on all of the following: references in ancient texts to "Thule," Iceland's physical geography, history, political geography, anthropology, education and professions, zoology, and taxation. Burton also provides a "Catalogue-Raisonne of Modern Travels in Iceland" that lists 49 titles, 28 in English, of both books and articles; as well as a section on "Preparations for Travel," which contains pithy advice, warnings about guides, routes, and the like.

SMITH, WALLER, OSWALD, WATTS, LOCK, TROLLOPE, BANKS, FONBLANQUE, LOCK, COLES, SIM, HARLEY, HOWELL, LEITH, COLLINGWOOD, 1873-97

Smith, R. Angus. To Iceland in a Yacht. Privately printed by Edmonston and Douglas: Edinburgh, 1873, vi +153 pp. With 14 illustrations, including four photographs of Reykjavik; these are among the most important contributions this book makes, since the images arising from the prose are often indistinct. One of the photographs, "Shore and Large Warehouse," presents two beached boats, quite sturdy and massive, in the right foreground, men working near one of them, and then the warehouse, and the curve of the bay and sharply-gabled houses in the background. R. Angus Smith was a saga aficionado, and a chemist; observations he made on this trip yielded a paper on fogs in Iceland that appeared in Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, 5 (1876): 150-64.


saga steads. The illustrations, simple sketches of camp and saga sites, are by the author, who visited Iceland during three different summers.

William Lord Watts. *Across the Vatna Jökull: or, Scenes in Iceland. Being a Description of Hitherto Unknown Regions.* London: Longmans and Co., 1876, i + 202 pp. With one appendix, mainly on Icelandic volcanos and the physical features of Vatnajökull. With two illustrations, one showing two sledges being man-handled across the glacier, and two maps.Translated into Icelandic by Jón Eythórsson: *Nordur yfir Vatnajökul.* Reykjavík: Bókfellssútgafan, 1962. The translation has a useful 15-page introduction, as well as illustrations and photographs borrowed from the books of other British travellers to Iceland between 1860-1880. Jón points out that the first five crossings of Vatnajökull, between 1875-1903, were achieved by foreigners; and that Watts had five Icelanders in his party; all are here identified. William Lord Watts (1851-1877), an explorer and mountaineer, was also a geologist. He read a paper on Vatnajökull, and his fears that it was spreading northward so rapidly that it was a threat to life, before the Royal Geographical Society. See *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society,* xx, no. 1, December 31, 1875, pp. 21-32. He also wrote *Snioland; or Iceland, its Jökulls and Fjalls.* London: Longmans and Co., 1875.


Anthony Trollope. *How the 'Mastiffs' Went to Iceland.* London: Virtue and Company, 1878, 48 pp. With 16 illustrations (by Mrs. Hugh Blackburn, who also wrote about the jaunt. Her article appeared in *Good Words,* 20 (1879): 429-32, 480-86, 559-65, 622-28. Her drawings are sometimes cartoonish and fun, thereby offering a parallel to Trollope's prose). There are also two photographs. One is of the Reykjavík's harbor; and the other is of the entire party of Mastiffs, 15 in all, astride their mounts. The huge, white-bearded Trollope seems larger than his pony. Translated into Icelandic by Bjarni Guthmundsson: *Islandsferd Mastiffs.* Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagssins, 1960. An Eftirmáli discusses Trollope's career, and notes provide details regarding all the Icelanders mentioned in the text. Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), a famous and prolific Victorian novelist, was invited on an excursion aboard the "Mastiff," an 840-ton screw steamer with a crew of 34. It was owned by John Burns (later Lord Inverclyde), a partner at Cunard Lines who was also the host on this cruise. The ship stopped at St. Kilda and the Faroes before dropping anchor at Reykjavík. Trollope also wrote an essay, "Iceland," for the *Fortnightly Review,* 24 (1878): 176-90.
Banks, William Mitchell. *A Narrative of the Voyage of the Argonauts in 1880*. Compiled by the Bard from the most authentic records, illustrated by the photographer, and intended for the amusement, edification, and everlasting glorification of the Argonauts themselves. Edinburgh: Printed for the Argonauts, 1881, 134 pp. With 16 photographs. "Sunday Morning in Reykjavík Bay" shows dozens of sailing vessels at anchor. There are two images of farm-houses with thick sod roofs; one of the Bruará, sans bridge; another of Adalstraeti. Sir William Mitchell Banks (1824-1904) was an eminent Liverpool surgeon. The photographer, Richard Caton, taught at the University of Liverpool.


Coles, John. *Summer Travelling in Iceland, Being the Narrative of Two Journeys Across the Island by Unfrequented Routes*. London: John Murray, 1882, x + 269 pp. With a Chapter on Askja by E. D. Morgan. Appendix one has translations of The Story of Thordr Hretha, Bandamanna Saga, and The Story of Hrafinkel, Frey's Priest; these translations were "supervised" by Eiríkr Magnússon; see MORRIS. Appendix two, "Outfit and Expenses," has advice for tourists. With 19 illustrations plus a map of Iceland. The illustrations, e.g., Thingvellir, Geysir and Strokr, Icelandic Head-Dress, are taken from sketches made by Cole. Includes cameo portraits of Jón of Vidrkaer and his wife, and a somber view of Reykjavík. Translated into Icelandic by Gisli Olafsson: John Coles, *Islandsferd*. Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfan Hildur, 1964, 2nd printing, 1988. With an introduction by Haraldur Sigurdsson. John Coles (1833-1910) was a professional geographer, as well as an instructor of practical astronomy at the Royal Geographical Society. In his youth he was a widely-travelled seaman. He fought in the Crimean War, and in British Columbia he prospected for gold and had adventures with Indians.

Sim, George Charles, *From England to Iceland: A Summer Trip to the Arctic Circle*. London: Hamilton Adam and Co., 1885, xii + 120 pp. With 45 illustrations, "chiefly from original photographs," these appearing in eight "plates," each a montage of several images. Plate I includes pictures of the "S.S. Camoens" moored at Leith, of its saloon, its decks, etc. Other plates show scenes in Reykjavík, typical views of Thingvellier, and the like.

Harley, Ethel B. (Mrs. Alec Tweedie). *A Girl’s Ride in Iceland*. London and Sydney: Griffith, Farran, Okeden, and Welsh, 1889, viii + 166 pp. There was a second edition in 1894, a third in 1895. Includes a chapter, "Icelandic Literature," by Jon Stefansson, and an appendix, "What is a Geysir?" by her father, George Harley. With 17 illustrations and a map. Engravings present the party on horseback, Icelandic scenes and figures. Those of Reykjavík, of Almannagja, and of the Bruará are based on photographs.
Howell, Frederick W.W. *Icelandic Pictures Drawn with Pen and Pencil*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1893, 176 pp. There are 13 full page drawings. Four of them have been lifted from Mayer: 1) "An Icelandic Funeral," which depicts a small party following a coffin balanced across the saddle of a pony; 2) "Portland," the arched cape; 3) "Bridge over the Jokulsâ; 4) "Icelandic Country Church," which again depicts the funeral group. There are a few photographs, one of special interest, because the author is therein: "The Party that Made the First Successful Ascent of the Oraefa Jokull."

Leith, Disney. *Three Visits to Iceland, Being Notes Taken at Sea and on Land: Comprising a Pilgrimage to Skalholt, and Visits to Geysir and the Njala District*. London: J. Masters and Co., 1897, 218 pp. There's a Postscript, with a memorial to Dr. Grimr Thomsen, writer and translator, member of the Althing from 1869-1891, and editor of the newspaper, *Isafold*. He died in November 1896. An appendix includes "Gunnar's Holm," a poem by Jonas Hallgrimsson; "Going to Church" and "Hannes the Fuller," from a modern Icelandic tale, "Athalstane," by Pål Sigurdsson; and "The Earthquake of 1896," extracts from *Isafold* about the earthquake that devastated an area the author had just visited. Includes photographs of 1) Reykjavik, 2) the interior of the Cathedral in Reykjavik, 3) the altar in the Thingvellir church, 4) Almannagja, 5) the steamship "Laura." There's one full-page drawing of the church and farm at Bessastadir, and dozens of small marginal or quarter page sketches that are intertwined with the text. Leith and her daughter did the sketches. A later version, *Peeps at Many Lands: Iceland* London: A. and C. Black, 1908, 70 pp., one intended for a juvenile audience, includes 12 unremarkable water-colors by Leith and M.A. Wemyss. Second edition, 1911.

Collingwood, W.G. and Jón Stefansson. *A Pilgrimage to the Saga-Steads of Iceland*. Ulverston: W. Holmes, 1899, x + 187 pp. With dozens of illustrations, 13 in color, drawn from nearly 300 watercolors and sketches made when the authors visited the major saga sites in 1897. A wonderful book appeared a few years ago that reproduces, in vibrant colors, 161 of Collingwood's illustrations: *Fugur Islands og fornir sögustadir. Svipmyndir og sendibréf úr Islandsför W.G. Collingwoods 1897*. Edited by Haraldur Hannesson et al., Reykjavik: Orn og Orlygur, 1988, 324 pp. Includes a detailed introduction, 65 period photographs, and 14 letters Collingwood wrote from Iceland to his family (all translated into Icelandic), as well as an August 1897 interview Collingwood gave to a journalist. William Gershom Collingwood (1854-1932) was John Ruskin's secretary and biographer. He was also interested in archaeology and Northern antiquities. Eiríkur Magnússon, William Morris's collaborator, encouraged Collingwood to translate *Kormaks Saga*; he did so, with the help of a talented Icelander who lived in London, Dr. Jón Stefansson (1862-1952). That project led to their decision to travel to Iceland in 1897 and do the work that led to the publication of this book.

The accounts left behind by these 15 visitors reflect many of the motivations for coming North that we've already noted. There are those interested mainly in saga-sites, like Waller, Oswald, Leith
and Collingwood; and again there are explorer-mountaineers, here represented by Watts and Howell, both registering impressive firsts, the former with his traverse of Vatnajökull, the latter with his climb of Oraefajökull. There are those who have come for a short visit, who will take that standard tour, like Smith, Trollope, and Banks; Fonblanque and Harley (two of the four women among the 15) have come mainly for the pony-trekking. Finally, in this last quarter of the century, we have a new group, represented by the two Locks (not related), Sim, and Coles, those whose central aim is to offer advice to fellow tourists.

Charles Lock planned his book as the Baedecker that would-be tourists to Iceland lacked, so it is packed with useful information: on the schedules and routes of the mail steamers (by 1878 two in service); on the prices of guides, horses, food and lodging, and the like. There's advice for fishermen and hunters, as well as for ornithologists, e.g., "See Baring-Gould's catalogue," and for pilgrims to saga sites, e.g., "After crossing the Affall, examine the site of Bergthora's knoll, where Njall was burnt, also the hollow where the murderers hid their horses, and the little peat moss called Káratjörn (Kári's tarn) where the fugitive quenched his burning garments" (p. 319). This advice appears along with nine suggested itineraries; here's the first: "Rekjavík to Thingvellir, Geysir, Gullfoss, Hekla, Njal's Country, Eyrarbakki and Krisuvík. Twelve days." Note that "Njals Country" has been added to destinations on that standard tour, this because so many Britshers were now familiar with Dasent's Njála. Lock advises them to bring it along. Since Lock wintered on the north coast, at Husavík, there are some interesting and unusual passages, e.g., of him teaching English to a group of young Icelanders, of him getting lost in a fierce storm while trying to reach Akureyri with a pony-drawn sledge. And Lock approaches problems like drunkenness in fresh ways, pointing out that one never sees a drunken Icelandic woman. The general run of these writers comment on women in terms of that head-dress which they all wanted to sketch, or in terms of the quaint custom of the ladies of the house helping strangers undress and then bringing them coffee and basins of milk in the morning. Lock has an anthropologist's eye, as a detailed--and redolent--portrait of a badstofa suggests; and he has a reformer's heart and mind, as demonstrated by his forceful, lecturish disquisitions on a wide variety of social problems. Lock concludes with the "hope that these pages may offer such small aids to gadding tourists as will induce them to turn their steps in the same direction, and contribute their mite of foreign gold and foreign ideas, without which the island will never prosper" (p. 262). The appeal to his countrymen to go to Iceland and spend their money is unique. Other writers typically complain that there are too many tourists coming to Iceland, spreading bad habits with their filthy lucre.

Coles avers that "though many works on Iceland have been published, dealing with its botany, geology, and natural history, I am only aware of one, of recent date, that would be of any real service to a tourist, viz., [LOCK]; and this, unfortunately, is out of print" (p. 2). So he provides another mine of information, updating schedules and prices, offering warnings about bogs, unkindly
farmers, routes where there might not be grass for the horses, and the like. Coles is the first of these writers to tout a specific product: "Porter's anti-mosquito veils ... I should strongly advise anyone visiting Iceland to get one; they can be purchased at 181 Strand" (p. 77). Such explicit plugs, complete with the merchant's address, remind us that Iceland is out at the end of one of the tentacles of a rapidly growing tourist industry. An Icelandic beneficiary of that industry is mentioned in nearly every one of these accounts from the 1860's onward. This was Geir Zoega (1831-1917), a guide and provider of everything from horses to tents to momentos like silver bracelets. Coles says that he "was originally a guide, and having saved some money, he opened a store; being a shrewd and enterprising man, he very soon increased his capital, and is at the present moment [1882] one of the wealthiest men in Iceland. Among other things which he has done, in advance of the general ideas of his countrymen, is draining a bog and converting it into a meadow, from which he told me he got four times as much hay as could be made, on a like area, in any part of the island; he has also brought the plow into use on his farm, and levelled the hummocks on his grass-land, which he says has greatly increased the hay-crop. He is the owner of a fine schooner and several fishing boats, all of which are engaged in the cod and shark fisheries. I am glad to say that his success has not spoilt him, for he is just as civil and obliging now as he ever could have been when he was a guide, getting his five kröner a day" (pp. 165-66).

Zoega must have made a pretty penny off of the "mastiffs," the jolly crowd who came to Iceland for a few days on a private steam yacht of that name, and also off of the "argonauts" who came with William Banks on the yacht, "Argos." Zoega provided horses (Trollope's group needed 65, with packs and saddles), and tents at the Geysirs for both groups. In the narratives of Trollope and Banks there's a feeling of the rich at play, like 20th century jet-setters. All of these light-hearted vacationers had apparently read DUFFERIN, they make sport and "japes" out of saddle-sores, minor discomforts of sleeping on the floor of the small church at Thingvellir or within the rented tents at the Geysirs, where they fed turf into the maw of Strokr, while waiting for the great Geysir to perform. While the narratives were intended only to remind "mastiffs' and "argonauts" of their few days of "adventure" in the far North, they both provide interesting glimpses of Reykjavik, which Trollope finds clean and pleasant, though "fishy." He feels the claim that all Icelanders can read must be true, since there are five newspapers published in Iceland, and Macbeth had recently been translated into Icelandic. Banks finds Reykjavík cleaner and more respectable than he'd anticipated, with several large stores well-provided with merchandise, with a new "Parliament House" under construction.

Later visitors will tour the completed building, and watch the Althing in session. And by the late 1880's, Harley can report that "there are two small inns in the town, as well as a club house, post office, and stores, besides a druggist, a photographer, and two or three silver smiths" (p. 95). In reading these books chronologically, one gets a sense of change over the years, usually
progressive, particularly after 1874, when, as Coles reports "Iceland was granted a new constitution, and with it, the command of certain sums of money" (p. 124). He describes a suspension bridge being built at Godafoss, and a new road crossing a high heath near Akureyri. Tourists in the 1880's could ride part of the way to Thingvellir on a newly-built road, a big improvement over the pony track the early travellers used. Leith made three trips to Iceland over a period of a few years, and she thus saw many improvements, but she was ambiguous about them: "though those who love and are interested in the people may wish them to participate in some of the advantages of modern invention and resource, they cannot but hope that it may be long before the country is despoiled of its unconventionality, and laid open to the demoralizing inroads of the Cockney tourist and pleasure seeker. Long may the inhabitants retain their simplicity, honesty, and sterling warmth of heart" (p. 108). Holland--and Morris and Burton, and others--had lamented, much earlier, that the Cockney hordes had already descended, that the steam-ship had brought those mere pleasure-seekers who threw their chicken bones and Fortnum and Mason jars into the Geysir pits, who with their profligate ways had turned the Icelanders into money grubbing sharpers. All of these well-intentioned Britishers were of course both wrong and right, seeing in simple farmers a questionable pastoral ideal, projecting upon them their own distaste for modern civilization with all its crowded, cluttered, commercial vulgarities. These ambiguous attitudes about progress are still with us.

Other travellers, in the interstices of their descriptions of the countryside and their skirmishes with Icelandic guides and ponies, provide snapshots of enduring problems rather than progress. Harley laments that people in Akureyri are drunk on a Sunday, and she calls brandy "the curse of civilization," apparently not realizing that steamers like the one she's now using for a hotel off-loaded that brandy in these northern ports. Looking down from her comfortable cabin at the scene on a small pier at Bordeyri, Harley ponders 40 Icelandic emigrants who will seek a new life abroad: "men, women, and children, many of the former quite old, apparently not more than one in five capable of a good day's work" (p. 89). Such comments provide, as so often in these narratives, a window into specific and sometimes harsh realities in Iceland at the end of the century.

Watts records the first successful traverse of Europe's largest glacier, his second attempt to go "where no mortal had planted his foot before" (p. 1). He suggests that the same impulse that sent Iceland's original settlers across the Atlantic a thousand years ago now sends the right sort of explorer-traveller again out into the unknown, to test his valor and to emulate his Teutonic ancestors. Watts and his party of five Icelanders were snowed in on top of the glacier for several days, and after they made it down, they had to endure a long march across lava wastes to find shelter and food in the north, so their valor was indeed tested. Watts' narrative is always precise and lively, and he knows something of Icelandic history and lore. So bedraggled are they at one point in the trek, for instance, that Watts says he is not worried about the outlaws and land-spirits that legend locates there, because
those creatures would certainly retreat at the first sight of his sorry crew. Watts discovered several new peaks protruding through the glacier, and he named one of them after his chief guide. So there was a Mount Paul, and the guide then became known as Pál Jökull. At the first farm they reached, near Myvatn, Watts learned that a famous countryman, Richard Burton, was spending his second summer in Iceland, and a few days later they met in Akureyri. Unfortunately, their conversation was not recorded, since Burton himself had hoped, in 1872, to be the first to cross the huge glacier, one of the few challenges in Iceland up to his high standards. One of the delights in considering these travel books together is that the writers sometimes meet each other, competing for horses in Reykjavik, waiting for the great Geysir to blow, killing time aboard ship. And what they write about these encounters sometimes differs.

Howell's descriptions of the first ascent of Oraefajökull are striking. He reviews all previous attempts to climb this dangerous glacier, starting in 1794, up to his own failed effort in 1890. In 1891, his party approaches the final pitch, up a steep cone: "But here the guides stood fast, and I heard that phrase of evil omen to an Icelandic traveller, ekki lingra (no further). So, casting off the rope, I cut my own way up the shining pyramid of ice which crowns the Knappr. After an hour's hard work, I found myself upon its rounded head ... But the aneroid proved, what I had long suspected, that this was not the real summit. True, it was the southern peak, 5600 feet in height, but the central yet remained unconquered. Descending to the guides, I roped again." And four hours later, despite huge crevasses and a cross ridge that "looked like a lion lying right athwart our path," they "slowly rose, until, at 6400 feet, the dome was gained" (p. 75). Sharp images and imaginative similes evoke the proportions and beauty and danger of the glacier, and his comments on his own efforts, actually quite heroic, are strikingly low-key.

I shall conclude with brief selections from the observations of four saga enthusiasts: Waller, Oswald, Leith, and Collingwood. Dasent's Njála spurred Waller to Iceland: I "was wild to visit the scene of such a tremendous tragedy." But he could not "set about it in the orthodox manner," since he "could not afford to buy a quantity of horses, and supplies of preserved food for the journey. ... Some friends suggested that it would be an advantage to join a party; but I ... should do but little sketching in the society of men whose sole object was sport. So I determined to go alone; and I went" (pp. 1-2). Five points emerge here: 1) Dasent's Njála was significant; many post-1861 travellers quote from it--only Waller says it was the main reason for the trip. 2) An "orthodox manner" for the trip implies that significant numbers of people have made it, enough to provide the jaunt a pattern and a correct mode. 3) The trip requires some money, not the wealth of a Banks or Stanley, but more than a young art student was likely to have. 4) There's an assumption that the British members of any "party" would be interested solely in shooting birds and hooking salmon (Incidentally, fishing rights in Iceland's best salmon rivers were being swiftly bought up by British sportsmen's clubs). 5) Waller's determination to "go alone" strikes a 20th century note, one that
carries with it a sense that because he won't be insulated within a cocoon of his own countrymen, his experiences will be different, perhaps more authentic.

Waller does present fresh tableaus, e.g., of a very long church service, with parishioners wandering in and out of the church, drinking brandy and chatting with their fellows through the open windows, snorting snuff, all while the minister droned through his long sermon. He too was chewing, and once he "stopped in the middle of his blessing to spit with great velocity and accuracy, three consecutive times into the middle of the nave" (p. 87). An interesting passage concerns an afternoon at Hlidarendi, "the most sacred spot in all the country to anyone conversant with Gunnar's life. I was very anxious to make a correct sketch of the place ... I had not been at work long when an old man joined me, and pulling a worn edition of the Saga out of his pocket, began to read to me of Gunnar's death. ... We then pushed up the hill for some little distance, and found a cairn. 'It is Gunnar's grave,' said the old man. 'Here they buried him; ... his spirit rested not in the stony chamber, for on the starlit nights the war songs he had sung in his life were heard again upon the hillside, and magic lights were seen to burn within the cairn.' How strange it all seemed" (pp. 113-15). Strange indeed. What is revealed here, mainly, is Waller's romantic enthusiasm, his implicit belief in the historicity of the sagas. Gunnar really lived, and he died on this land they now tread, and there is his very cairn. So enthusiastic is Waller, that he seems to have forgotten that he didn't know enough Icelandic to understand the old man reading from that "worn edition." The whole scene is obviously invented, but it's also instructive in what it suggests about the power of a literary tradition that could attract young men like Waller across the wide ocean so that they might somehow partake. (Morris's short poem, "Gunnar's Howe Above the House at Lithend," lingers on that tradition; see Morris, pp. 122-23.)

Oswald was also impelled North by her enthusiasm for the sagas; by her third trip, in 1879, she spoke Icelandic well, and she is usually a reliable commentator. But once that same enthusiasm caused her to put herself into that cliched tableau of the paterfamilias reading a saga to an attentive audience: "Thorgrimur read aloud from Njála. The women paused in their work to listen, the men drew near from the other end of the room, all intent on the old story written in the ancient Norse language forgotten in Norway but the living Icelandic still" (p. 168). Given those other descriptions of badstofa, I suspect that Oswald is here influenced as much by engravings of Mayer's illustration as she is by an actual reading. Leith, another British lady who knew Icelandic well--she had apparently translated some of the sagas of Bishops--visits Skalholt. There she finds some paintings to be "rather quaint," and later says, "It was difficult for me to realize that this was really Skalholt--Thorlak's Skalholt--of which I had read so much" (p. 94). Leith's disappointment at seeing the actual Skalholt recalls Morris's use of that polite "quaint," as well as his rueful "What littleness and helplessness has replaced the old grandeur." Such words float on the sighs of true believers.
Collingwood has an audience of saga readers in mind, folk who do not have the opportunity to become pilgrims to Iceland's saga sites. He asserts that such readers will receive "little help from travellers' tales of pony-riding and picnic making at the Geysirs or Hekla or the sulphur mines,--none of which are so much as named in the stories of old." So he offers here "a picture book to illustrate the sagas of Iceland. It is intended to supply the background of scenery which the ancient dramatic style takes for granted" (p. v). The illustrations are particularly fine, capturing the grandeur of the same landscapes that the saga heroes moved across. And the prose that accompanies the illustrations is evocative. Beneath the drawing, "Knafa-Holar," appears the following: "On the skirts of Hekla, and half smothered in the sand that is still encroaching upon many a league of pasturage, and thrown into strange swirls by the wind, two little rocky hillocks rise, one on either side of the track. Here, in A.D. 986, the enemies of Gunnar, the outlawed hero of Njal's Saga, set upon him, fifteen men, as he road homewards, with no companions but his two brothers" (p. 22).

Collingwood concludes that "our one desire was to find the scenes of long ago--to put a background to the figures of history: and this we have done. ... We have seen the homes of the heroes. They are no longer empty names to us, no longer formless dreams; and with their reality the great dreams of old start into life and action. It is as if a curtain had gone suddenly up; as if our eyes were opened, at last, to the glory of the North (pp. 179-80). Stirring thoughts, and perhaps more truthful than he realizes, since arm-chair travellers might appreciate these idealized pictures more than they would the actual sites. I'm not sure, but I recall Morris's disappointment at Hrutstead, Leith's at Skalholt, and the wistful responses of others as they contemplate the poor farms and bleak vistas of 19th century Iceland.

In an introduction she wrote in 1990, for the 21st edition of DUFFERIN, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir says that "it was our good fortune that around the middle of the 19th century a number of remarkable foreigners visited Iceland, attracted by our literary heritage that is the core of our identity, and by the wild, exotic landscape. Together with our own poets and influenced by romanticism, they pointed out to the nation, and the rest of the world, the value of a landscape and a culture that is so vastly different from anything else." In the foregoing, I have commented upon the visits of several of those "remarkable foreigners," and I've tried to suggest the usefulness and value of their written responses to 20th century readers. What can we learn from their accounts?
Sometimes a great deal about the writers themselves, about the ways their professions or avocations affected their responses. More important is what we can learn about Iceland, about "that culture that is so vastly different," and about the severe problems Icelanders had in preserving not just their culture but the lives of their children during periods when the climate, the Danish merchants, Surtr himself, seemed to be conspiring against them. But they survived, and then they moved into periods of change, and struggle, and progress--often down roads not wholly Icelandic. During all these periods there were witnesses, these British travellers and tourists. And we are fortunate that they
wrote down what they saw, since, as the Icelandic proverb has it, "Glöggt er gests augad." Many of those British visitors had keen eyes, and skilled pens, and their diaries and journals can provide what I've called "glimpses" into the daily lives of Icelanders in the 18th and 19th centuries, glimpses that are available nowhere else. Modern Icelanders, as interested in the past as their ancestors who read sagas by candle-light, have evidently realized this, and that is why so many of these works have been translated into Icelandic, and why they sell so well, even in elaborate and expensive editions.

References:
George Webbe Dasent, The Story of Burnt Njal, or Life in Iceland at the End of the Tenth Century.


I have borrowed the lead phrase in my title from BURTON, p. ix, as did Richard F. Tomasson, "Iceland on the Brain," American-Scandinavian Review, 60.4 (1972): 380-91. His book, Iceland: The First New Society. Reykjavik: Iceland Review and the University of Minnesota Press, 1980, has a short section on travellers to Iceland. Also useful, particularly for its many excerpts from travellers' accounts, is Alan Boucher's The Iceland Traveller: A Hundred Years of Adventure. Reykjavik: Iceland Review, 1989. I have profited from Haraldur Sigurdsson's Island í skrifum erlenda manna um thiódlif og náttúra landsins. Reykjavik: Landsbókasafn Islands, 1991; and from Bodvar Kvaran's unpublished manuscript, "Ferda-og landfraedirrit um Island: Erlendit höfundar"; and from the suggestions of the editors of Skírnir. I wish also to thank helpful librarians at the University of Massachusetts, at Yale and Harvard, and at the Landsbókasafn Island.