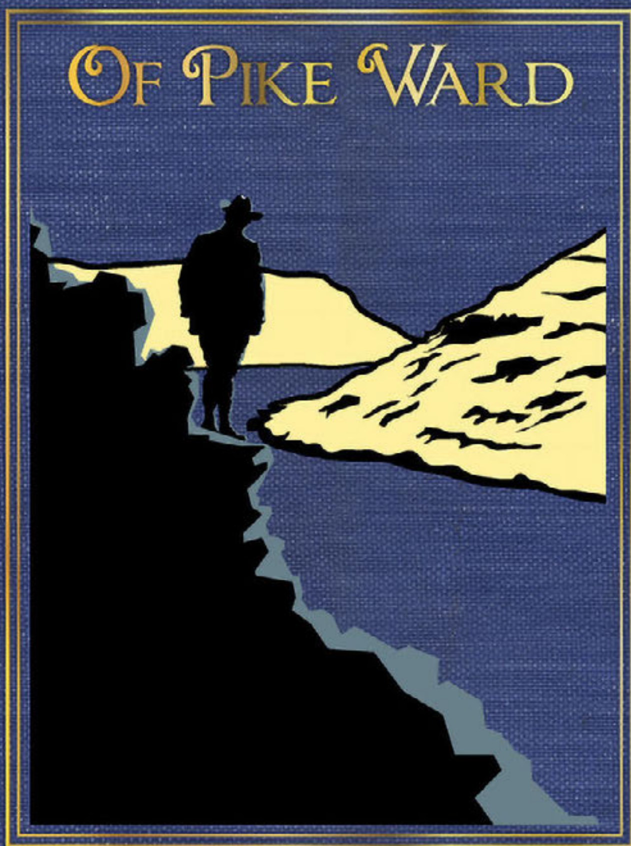
The Icelandic Adventures



Edited By

K. J. Findlay

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THE ICELANDIC ADVENTURES OF PIKE WARD

EDITED BY K.J. FINDLAY

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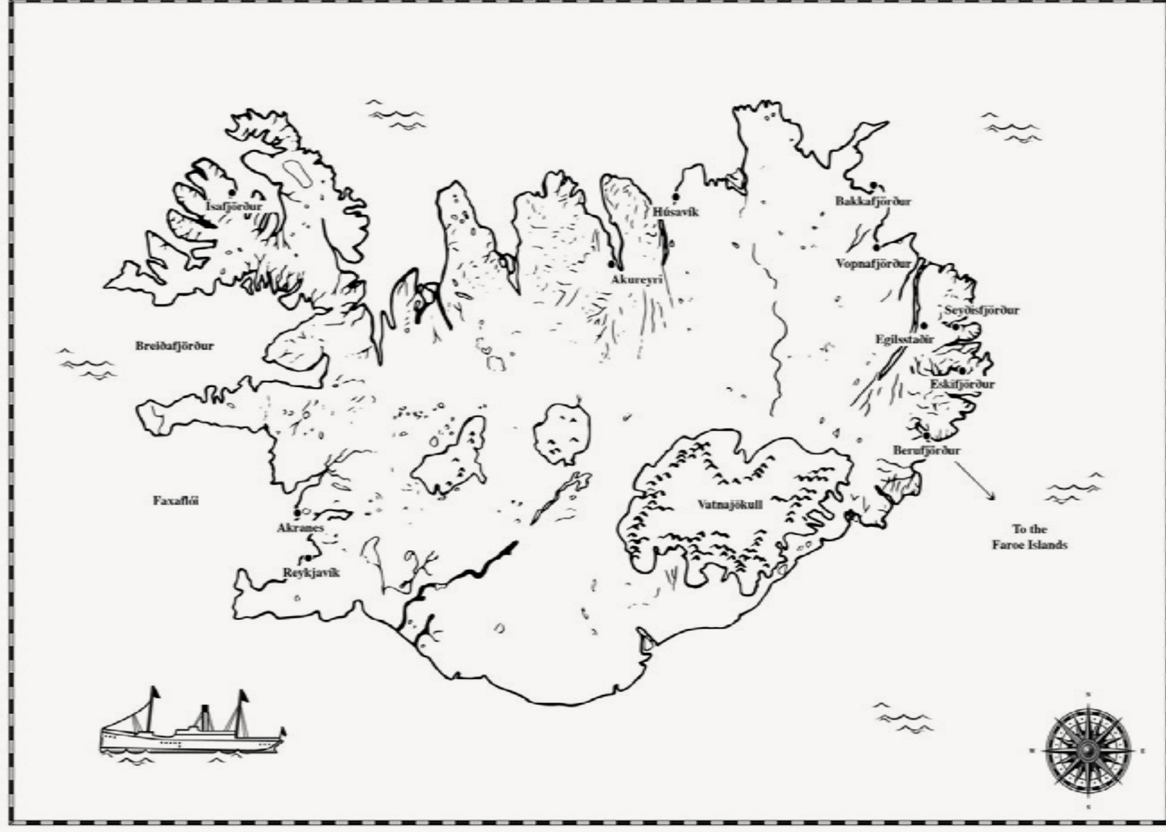
To Mr Pike Ward

We remember you here, Mr. Ward!
For many years
you put gold on the farmer‘s table,
your words and deeds have truly been blessed.
You saved us from hardship
and we salute you for it.

You’re leaving this ice-capped country
and heading back home
where you will enjoy honour and wealth
but you will not be forgotten
by those who love you,
our dear Mr. Ward.

Bjólfur wishes that your beloved country
will celebrate you on your return
and that you will have a good life
over there. – With us
your name will never be forgotten
but written in gold.

— Presented to Pike Ward by Fjelagið Bjólfur
Translated by Hallgrímur Jökull Ámundason
With thanks to Andrea Ward


Ísafjörður
Húsavík
Bakkafjörður
Akureyri
Vopnafjörður
Seyðisfjörður
Egilsstaðir
Breiðafjörður
Eskifjörður
Berufjörður
Vatnajökull
Faxaflói
To the
Faroe Islands
Akranes
Reykjavík

Introduction

'…a sea-farer, an adventurer, a trader in high latitudes, whose story, if it came to be written, would seem to belong to other times than ours…'

— May Morris, An Appreciation of Pike Ward, 1937

Pike Ward was a fish merchant from Devon who became a Knight of the Grand Cross of the Icelandic Falcon, the nation's highest honour. According to an affectionate cartoon of 1901, he was 'the best-known man in Iceland', yet his role in the nation's remarkable rise has been largely forgotten. For more than twenty years he lived between England and Iceland until he was as Icelandic as he was English. He wrote this entertaining and evocative diary in 1906, when he was 49. In middle-age he was an imposing figure, tall and generously built, with a sturdy, waxed moustache. He was gregarious, jovial and canny, and had a talent for making friends, but his family life was marred by sadness.

The diary is his account of one working year in Iceland, from March to November. He wrote it by hand, recording events almost daily in three notebooks that went everywhere with him. They travelled in the luggage racks of the *Flying Scotsman* and on steamships that pitched and plunged across the North Atlantic. They sat on his desk and overheard the latest talk of Reykjavík society. They were packed into saddlebags and carried by tough little horses over mountains and cliffs and through the vast, empty grandeur of the Icelandic landscape. Eventually, the three battered books found their way into a storage box in the Bristol home of Pike's great-grandson, Steven, where they were rediscovered in 2016.

More than a century after it was written, the fresh and unaffected style of Pike's writing is striking. It is peppered with comical

anecdotes and vivid descriptions, along with some moving accounts of tragedy and moments of exasperation and worry. It is, without doubt, a diary that was meant to be read rather than an outlet for private reflections. What was included and what was left out, what was explained and what was assumed to be understood, were decisions shaped by the audience in Pike's mind. The frequent comparisons to south Devon suggest that he was writing for loved ones or acquaintances in his home town, Teignmouth. The need for a certain amount of self-censorship when writing for others is perhaps behind his original choice of title: *The Book of Lies*. There is nothing in the writing itself that speaks of deliberate deception; indeed, the diary's significance is its authenticity as a contemporary, eye-witness account of a pivotal period in Iceland's history, told from Pike's unusual viewpoint as both insider and outsider.

As well as a notebook, he usually carried a camera. He was a prolific photographer, shooting in standard and stereo formats, and he developed his own images in a DIY darkroom or the studios of professional photographer friends. In both his writing and photography, it is Pike's rare ability to connect with people at all levels of society, from officials and intellectuals to servants and fishermen, that elevates his work from diverting travelogue to something much more valuable. He created a rich and unique record of Iceland at the turn of the 20th century, a window through which we can glimpse everyday life in a country transforming itself from an isolated and impoverished outpost to an affluent, independent nation.

* * *

Pike Ward was born in the seaside town of Teignmouth in 1856, the first of four children born to Eliza and George Perkins Ward. As the eldest son, he was given his mother's maiden name, Pike, as his first name. Teignmouth was a busy port close to the clay mines around Newton Abbot and George was a ship broker, merchant and shipping insurance agent. The business did well and the Wards were a prominent, middle-class family.

Two episodes from 1861, when Pike was five years old, give us clues to George's character. Encouraged by his friends, he ran for election to the Teignmouth Local Board on a single-issue campaign. His aim was to stop the building of a sea wall, not because it was a bad idea but because he felt taxpayers' money was being used unfairly to benefit the landed gentry. He argued that the Earl of Devon, who owned the site, would have a new asset built free of charge on land that he could close to ordinary people on a whim. George was a popular candidate and was duly elected. A few months later, he was brought before the local court for disobeying the orders of a coastguard in a dispute over aiding a grounded vessel, threatening to strike the man and refusing to apologise. George's status as a pillar of the community evidently did not stop him challenging authority when he saw fit. Like his father, Pike combined a self-confident sociability with a wide streak of nonconformity.

When George died in 1881, 25-year-old Pike became a director of the company, but it was Pike's mother, Eliza, who took over the day-to-day business of shipbroking. She was clever and tenacious, and Pike adored her. Her old friend and client Charles Davey Blake, of the clay mining company Watts, Blake, Bearne & Co., described her as 'the most intelligent and experienced of the citizens of Teignmouth'. The port handled around 100,000 tonnes of imports and exports per year and Eliza worked hard to maintain the company's share of the trade, directing ships all over Britain and Europe. In 1905, Charles wrote to her:

> 'What a lively little place Teignmouth will be with all these steamers etc coming – and how proud you will be at seeing nearly all the captains coming to your office and taking off their caps to you. I am very glad for the sake of your dear little self that so much grist comes to your mill. You deserve it all.'

In the diary, it is clear that Pike enjoys the company of women and values their friendship. The Wards were not fervently religious

or sectarian, but they had ties to the Congregationalist Church and to a tradition of religious dissent that promoted equality between the sexes as well as between social classes, a background that helps to explain Pike's egalitarian outlook.

With Eliza capably running the family business, Pike was free to explore other avenues. In 1887, he became one of the directors of a new company, the Teignmouth Quay Company Ltd, which aimed to extend the town's quay and wharf capacity. Worthy though this scheme may have been, it cannot have provided much excitement, and it is easy to imagine that middle-class life in a small Victorian town was limiting, if not stifling, to a man with energy and curiosity. Like many Devon merchants, George had been involved in importing cod from Newfoundland and Labrador, and even lived there for a while, but the stocks were declining and it did not seem to Pike that the old trade was worth pursuing. If he wanted adventure, new business opportunities and a name for himself out of the shadow of his family, he would have to go elsewhere.

In his mid-thirties, Pike looked a thousand miles to the north and decided to investigate the opportunities in Iceland. He arrived on a large island of magnificent, savage beauty, utterly unlike green and gentle Devon. A scattered population of just 80,000 souls battled a harsh climate, poor land and the weight of six centuries of misfortune and foreign rule. But the seas were rich and change was everywhere in the air. It was here that Pike found his place in the world.

To understand his role in Iceland's 20th-century transformation, we need to go back to the start of the nation's story. Iceland was settled in the 9th century by Viking pioneers, men of mainly Norwegian descent and women of more mixed heritage: wives, servants and slaves including many from Ireland and Britain. This fascinating group of people carved farmsteads from the new land and organised their society around a confederacy of chieftains. They had no overall ruler, and made decisions through a complex legal system based around the Alþingi, the annual outdoor assembly. The tales of these times, of blood-feuds and rivalries, feats of courage and the everyday struggles of life in an unforgiving

land, were later recorded in the Icelandic Sagas, the extraordinary body of work that underpins Iceland's literary culture. Over time, power became concentrated in the hands of fewer families, until in-fighting led the Icelanders to submit to the Norwegian king in 1262. The Kalmar Union of 1397 brought the kingdoms of Norway, Denmark and Sweden together under a single monarch, including Norway's overseas territories. Denmark emerged as the dominant power in the union, and thus Iceland found itself under Danish rule. Over the centuries, climate change, famine, disease, natural disasters and the imposition by Denmark of trade monopoly laws all contributed to Iceland's decline into abject poverty, reaching a miserable low point in the 18th century.

As the 19th century progressed, the climate improved slightly, the population began to recover from the catastrophes of the previous century and trade restrictions were lifted, although the economy remained under the control of Danish merchants. Although life for most Icelanders was still wretched, a sense of national pride began to grow, inspired by nationalist and folklorist movements in mainland Europe. By the 1830s, pressure was building throughout the Danish territories and Icelanders demanded a new national assembly. The cause was taken up by a small group of Icelandic students in Copenhagen who published political articles and poems of praise to the motherland. They were motivated by pride in their ancient language and culture on one hand, and a desire to modernise their country on the other. The calls for greater autonomy soon developed into a struggle for full independence. The Danish government conceded slowly, in stages, starting with the re-establishment of the Alþingi at Reykjavík in 1845.

In his 2000 work *The History of Iceland*, Gunnar Karlsson raises the question of why the Danes bothered to hang on to Iceland at all. It was a military liability in the North Atlantic, being almost impossible to defend, and by this time the financial support Iceland received from the Danish treasury outweighed the revenue it contributed. He suggests that the reason was more sentimental than pragmatic. The 19th-century romanticisation of the Viking Age cast Iceland as a repository of the 'true' Norse culture, an

idea that had appeal not just in Iceland but throughout northern Europe. Gunnar Karlsson suggests this nostalgia was behind Denmark's reluctance to let Iceland go, just as in Iceland it was fuelling the passion for independence.

Eventually, following years of negotiations and disputes, the Alþingi accepted a new constitution in 1874 as a sort of birthday present from the Danish king to mark the millennium of Iceland's settlement. It did not go as far as many people wanted, but it established a distinct status for Iceland under the Danish crown. In the years between Pike arriving in Iceland in 1891 and writing this diary in 1906, he witnessed further steps towards independence, including a significant expansion of Home Rule in 1904, when the role of governor was abolished and replaced with a minister for Iceland, a native Icelander based in Reykjavík.

Despite the mood of national ambition, Pike arrived in a country where the majority of people still lived in appalling poverty. Villages and towns had never developed as in other parts of Europe, and isolated farmsteads were the basic unit of society. Anyone who did not own farmland was tied by law to working for someone who did. The work was hard and people were equipped with only the most rudimentary tools. Farmhouses were made of turf and were usually cold, damp and infested with lice. In his 2010 social history *Wasteland With Words*, Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon reveals that it was common practice for hands, clothes and sheets to be washed in urine when they were washed at all, for people to spit on the floor and for food bowls to be licked clean by dogs. Disease was rife and children often died before they reached adulthood. In a traditional farmhouse, everyone lived in a single room called the baðstofa, often built on an upper level with livestock below to take advantage of the meagre warmth rising from the animals. Rooms were boarded with wood in better-off homes, or else the walls were bare turf. There was often no outhouse, so human and animal waste was piled in middens close to the living quarters. However, Pike's years in Iceland coincided with a period of great change, as urbanisation on the coasts accelerated, Reykjavík grew and transformed into a capital, and sanitation improved. By the

time this diary was written, doctors and social reformers were campaigning for better public health and housing, and gradually sickness, suffering and death were becoming less ubiquitous in Icelanders' everyday lives.

Around this time, Iceland was becoming increasingly popular with more adventurous British tourists, although a trip there was still considered exotic enough to merit reports to local newspapers and lectures on return. The Reverend R.F. Ashley Spencer told his audience at the Tylers Green Mutual Improvement Society in Buckinghamshire in 1901 that Iceland was a place where, 'the snowfields look in bright sunshine like dazzling fairy-lands'. He asserted that, 'no Briton, fagged with hard work, who sought restoration to health and energy would regret spending a holiday among its geysers and volcanoes'. Guides took tourists on ponies to see the main sites at Þingvellir, Geysir, Hekla and Gullfoss. There was an interest in what was perceived as a shared Germanic heritage and intellectuals such as the designer and poet William Morris were captivated by the country and its Sagas. However, most people in Britain remained largely ignorant of their northerly neighbour. In 1906, *The Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* expressed a patronising degree of surprise on being told that there was a theatre in Reykjavík, 'on the outer-most fringe of civilisation', where drama 'lingers on, shivering like a delicate mental edelweiss, on the brink of the abyss beyond which there is an intellectual void'.

In fact, despite the hardships and lack of formal infrastructure, Iceland was an educated society with almost universal literacy, an astonishing achievement when compared with more developed countries in the same period. Children learned at home by reading with their families in the evenings after work, their progress checked periodically by the local clergy. At a time when most people owned next to nothing, nearly every home had at least one book and literature was highly valued. The Sagas, religious texts and poetry, along with a rich oral tradition of folk tales, provided an architecture of the imagination that helped people to both understand and escape their everyday lives. Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon has shown that enormous effort went in to

disseminating written material in rural society, as people he terms 'barefoot historians' tirelessly copied out texts by hand and shared them. This love of learning was, he argues, a 'peasant mechanism for survival', an intellectual other-world that made life bearable. As well as reading, people took great pride in writing. Many people from humble backgrounds wrote diaries and autobiographies. Diaries were hugely popular in Victorian Britain too, and diarists usually wrote with an audience of friends and family in mind. In this regard, Pike's diary followed a British convention, although it is tempting to wonder to what extent he was also inspired by the Icelandic urge towards self-expression and the validation of ordinary experiences through writing.

In the early Middle Ages, the stories of Iceland and Britain intertwined as people sailed around the Viking world, fighting, trading, settling, and marrying. Over time the links broke, and in later centuries Iceland's relationship with Britain, and England in particular, came to be defined by fish. English boats began sailing to Iceland to fish soon after the turn of the 15th century. The English soon dominated the trade in Icelandic fish, much to the annoyance of the Danish monarchs who tried to prohibit their boats. The English resisted and the conflict sometimes turned to violence in the cold Atlantic seas. English fishermen made the journey to Iceland so frequently that Gunnar Karlsson even suggests that the expertise they gained helped to lay the foundations of the maritime supremacy that made the British Empire possible. By the 16th century, German merchants were muscling in on the trade, leading to skirmishes between crews. Eventually the Danish crown tightened its grip on Iceland to benefit Danish merchants, and the English and Germans went elsewhere to fish. Just as the modern age dawned, Iceland became disconnected from the great trading powers of Europe and increasingly isolated as a Danish outpost.

Icelandic fish remained of little commercial interest to Britain until the mid-19th century, when Icelandic waters began to look tempting once again. The cod stocks in Newfoundland and Labrador were in decline, Danish trade restrictions in Iceland were being relaxed and mechanised trawling was rapidly developing out

of British ports. By the end of the century, at least 40 trawlers from Hull and Grimsby were working off the coast of Iceland annually, with many more from Aberdeen, Lerwick and other ports. It was reported in the British press that a steam trawler could obtain a full cargo of the best quality mixed fish in 24 hours and could make over £1,000 in two trips. British crews were known to poach Danish waters, damage breeding grounds and encroach into estuaries and shallow banks fished by Icelanders. British steam trawlers were frequently seized and their skippers fined by Danish authorities. In 1895, the British government sent four naval ships to keep order. Their commander negotiated an agreement on fishing limits, only to be infuriated when the British trawlermen promptly reneged on it. He sympathised with the 'miserably poor' Icelandic fishermen who had to watch their livelihoods being taken from them. He noted the 'very bitter mood' of the Icelanders and the likelihood of reprisals against the British. In general, however, the British position was to pressure the less powerful Danish government to reduce Icelandic territorial waters as far as possible, and in 1901 the Icelandic limit was set at just three nautical miles. The previous year, three Icelanders had drowned while attempting to arrest the captain of the Hull trawler *Royalist* who responded by capsizing their rowing boat. *Royalist* was seized a month later while fishing illegally in Danish waters. Laws which restricted foreign trawlers from approaching Icelandic ports may have done more harm than good in this situation, since they ensured the trawlers stayed at sea, drifting in the fish banks even in perilous weather. On his retirement in 1903, the captain of a Danish government cruiser noted in *The Scotsman* that trawler owners, safely counting their profits back in Britain, 'could not easily find better help than laws that keep their fishermen frightened'.

Against this fractious backdrop, how was it that Pike Ward, an English fish merchant, became one of the most widely respected and well-loved people in Iceland? The answer lies in his ability to understand the trade not just from a British, or even Danish, perspective but from an Icelandic viewpoint, something that few other foreigners managed.

The centuries-old system of bondage that obliged Icelanders to work on farms effectively outlawed fishing as a full-time occupation. It was a seasonal activity, undertaken by farm workers as part of their duties. They used small, open rowing boats that were limited to day-long trips and could only exploit shallow waters close to shore. Despite the radicalism of the independence movement, Icelandic lawmakers were socially conservative, but changes in attitudes, pressure from Denmark and a growing population made it increasingly difficult to enforce the restrictions. By the time Pike arrived in the 1890s, growing numbers of workers were leaving the land and moving to the fishing stations that were springing up along the coast. Enterprising Icelanders could at last run larger, sail-powered vessels, employ specialised fishermen and follow the fish to deeper waters. Processing the catch employed even more people, especially women. A native, commercial fishing industry was being born, but it needed investment if it was to survive.

When he first visited Iceland, Pike Ward bought fish from British traders in the east, but he soon had two important realisations. Firstly, that while the Danes and the British bickered over the spoils of the deep sea, Icelanders were fishing in-shore and needed new customers. They might not have steam trawlers, but they were bringing in decent catches in rowing boats and, increasingly, sail boats. The trade was weighted against the Icelanders however, as it was still mainly carried out by barter with Danish merchants who inflated the value of their goods. Few Icelanders had access to money and they were trapped in iniquitous tick arrangements. Pike understood that what they needed was cash. Secondly, he saw that the Danes and other foreigners would only buy large cod, and the smaller fish, the type that the British markets wanted, were going to waste. Salt-fish was a popular staple in Britain in the days before fresh fish could be frozen at sea. In Devon it was crudely known as 'toe rag', and was served fried in batter or made into fish pie. If the smaller fish could be processed, salted and soft-dried in the way that British consumers liked, he could corner the market in a product that no-one else was buying.

Pike knew that if he could trade directly with the Icelandic fishermen, he could benefit himself and them. He had befriended the photographer and bookseller Sigfús Eymundsson in Reykjavík, so in 1893 he tried buying from fishermen in Akranes with Sigfús acting as interlocutor. The merchants attempted to dissuade the fishermen from selling to Pike but the offer to buy otherwise unwanted fish was too good to ignore and the experiment was a success. Pike learned Icelandic and was soon able to deal with the fishermen himself. In 1898, he moved to Hafnarfjörður, just south of Reykjavík, and set up a fish curing station there. Over time he expanded his trade from the south-west to the fjords of the north-west, and eventually to the east coast.

By the time he wrote this diary, he had established three bases, at Reykjavík, Ísafjörður and Seyðisfjörður. He spent his winters in Devon, returning to Iceland every spring. As there were no roads to speak of, he reached his bases by steamship, and from there made trips to the remote fishing stations using pack ponies and small boats. Everywhere he or his agents went, they stipulated exactly what type of fish he wanted and how it was to be prepared. He only wanted 'smáfiskur', small fish, no bigger than 16 inches. It was to be salted in good, pure salt for ten days, washed, pressed and soft-dried in the open. Fish that was too tender, overly dry or broken would not be accepted. Pike taught people how to carry out the process and imported the salt they needed. The product became known universally as 'Wardsfiskur', Ward's Fish. It was a new product for a new market, one that could not be controlled by Danish merchants and, most importantly, Pike paid for it up front, in cash.

When the bank in Reykjavík ran out of Danish banknotes in 1896, the fishermen trusted him to take his cargoes and send gold from England. From then on, he always paid in gold (which he carried with him in a leather bag) until Íslandsbanki started issuing banknotes in 1904.

In the mid-19th century, a tiny quantity, just over 30 tonnes, of Icelandic salt-fish was exported directly to Britain annually. By 1906, Pike alone was buying around 500 tonnes per year and he was

no longer the only British buyer. The Scottish company Copeland and Berrie had become well established and also paid in cash. Pike's money transformed the fortunes of Icelandic fishing communities, and their growing industry changed Icelandic society beyond all recognition. People could now go to Danish merchants for goods that they could pay for there and then, and demand better prices. They could invest in bigger boats, motors and nets. They could buy timber to construct fish stores. They could form co-operatives and control their business collectively. In time, Icelanders would develop the ports, buy the mechanised vessels and learn the skills to build a trawling industry, and with it a wealthy, modern nation.

Pike himself had experimented with trawling in 1899 but had given it up after just a year. He was the first person to run a trawler from an Icelandic port, the *Utopia* at Hafnarfjörður. The venture seemed to go well at first, but the British crew was unreliable and drunken, and could not be replaced from an Icelandic population with no experience of mechanised fishing. Pike lost £6,000 and never tried trawling again.

While living in Hafnarfjörður, Pike was known for his generosity and for the innovations he brought, such as the horse-drawn cart he built himself, the first in Iceland. People did not believe that he could get two horses to pull such a thing, but they were delighted when not only did he succeed but he offered lifts to Reykjavík in it. He made it known in Hafnarfjörður and everywhere he went that he wanted to purchase Icelandic objects, things to remind him of the country and its people. Over the years he built an unrivalled collection of Icelandic folk craft that filled his home.

For 22 years, Pike travelled back and forth between Devon and Iceland, between two existences. In 1896, when he was 40, he married Grace Agnes Wollacott in London and their first child, Edward, was born two years later. Agnes and Edward lived with Eliza in Teignmouth, where Pike would return each winter. Agnes died giving birth to their second son in 1901, while Pike was away. The tragedy was doubled 10 days later, when their baby died. Pike chose to give the child an anglicised Icelandic name: Thorarin.

Edward, aged three, was sent to live with a maternal aunt near Exeter.

Thorarin Ward may have been named after Pike's friend, the painter Þórarinn B. Þorláksson, who painted a portrait of him around this time. It is a revealing image, taken from a photograph of Pike with the background changed from a nondescript building to the mountains near Reykjavík. Þórarinn was part of a small group of artists who were consciously creating a new visual language for the emerging nation. By choosing to be represented by him in this setting, seated on his Icelandic horse and dressed for a life in Iceland, Pike made it clear that he was no longer simply an Englishman abroad. As he put it years later, Iceland had become 'something in the blood'.

1. Voyage to Reykjavík

I left Teignmouth on Saturday March 3rd for London, where I spent the weekend with my friend H.W. Perry. On Monday March 5th, we went from Euston Station to Edinburgh by the ten o'clock Flying Scotsman, and on arrival there took a cab to Leith and put up at the Commercial Hotel. After having had tea, went to the docks to see if the steamer *Vesta* had arrived and was informed she would dock in the morning as she had already arrived in Leith Roads.

On Tuesday March 6th, after ascertaining if the boat was in, I got my baggage taken aboard and saw the captain, who was an old friend of mine and was delighted to see me again. He informed me that the boat would sail at six o'clock that evening, so after sending off several farewell telegrams I went on board and took up my quarters in a cabin as far forward from the crew as possible. As I was then the only passenger except a young Norwegian named Kruger, I had a good choice of bunks but, as it turned out later, not a happy choice. At the time appointed, we cast off from the quay and wended our way through the shipping to the dock entrance and, after a lot of hauling and shouting and hooting of steam whistles, got out into Leith Roads and said farewell to the pilot and full speed ahead. It was blowing a smart gale from the north-west, which is a fair wind out of the Firth of Forth, and after supper I retired to my bunk and had a good night's sleep.

On Wednesday morning, I awoke in good time and went on deck and found it still blowing a gale but as it was from the land, the sea was comparatively smoother, although the vessel had a strong list to the starboard owing to the force of the wind. I was not uncomfortable and was able to get a good breakfast. All that day we got along fairly well until we opened up the Moray Firth which

gave a longer drift for the sea we began to pitch a bit but nothing got to inconvenience me.

As night drew on, we approached the Orkney Islands and at 11 o'clock got fairly in the west fjord opposite to Kirkwall. Here the captain decided to remain until daylight as it was still blowing hard and had every appearance of a heavy sea when we should get out into the Atlantic, and as he had three large motor boats lashed on his fore deck for conveyance to Iceland, he did not like to face the sea as he might injure the boats.

At 6am on Thursday morning, March 8th, we made another start and we had only been out an hour before whack! A great sea dashed on board and knocked the motor boats adrift, so Captain had to put the steamer before the sea in order to re-secure them. We then made another start. She rolled and pitched and took a bigger list to starboard every plunge until at last I was standing on my head, as it were, in my bunk. I got some more pillows and cushions and wedged myself fast as well as I could but the continued rolling was very uncomfortable, especially as I am so fat that I would not remain wedged fast, and so I wobbled up and down at every roll. About 6pm, she gave one extra roll and bang came open the door of the washstand, and out came the water can full of water and the tin with the waste water, and crash it all went over the floor, and me hanging out over the side of my bunk making a grab at my stockings, boots, slippers, books etc. that had all got loose. My slippers got full of water and the now empty cans got slinging up and down the floor as she rolled and a pretty old dido it kicked up. Swish, swash, went the water and rattle, rattle went the cans. I slung these out of the door into the saloon and my things up on the sofa and collapsed into my bunk again, but the water had got onto the heated steam pipes running along the side of the vessel and inside the cabin, so a great vapour arose and such a horrid smell

so that the stewardess came to see what the matter was. It was a sort of impromptu Turkish bath, so I told her what had happened and she slipped away into the next stateroom and made up a bed there for me. So I changed houses in pretty quick time and soon fell asleep.

9th March

I looked out of the porthole and saw Little Diamond Island[1] and there I got up and began to wash and dress and get on to the deck. I found we were just off the island of Nalsoe, which means the Needle Island as there is a hole in one cove of it which they say is like the eye of a needle. This island runs alongside the island of Stromoe, which means Tide Island, and thus forms the harbour of Tórshavn, for which port we were bound.

We let go anchor at six o'clock and by this time the steward had got me a good dish of fried eggs (four) and bacon and a cup of coffee and I sat down with great gusto to enjoy myself after two days' fast. There came on board to me two men I know very well so we had a long chat and did some little business. Then two other of my friends, Captain Jens Andresen and Captain Hans Jacobsen came on board and also did business as to future prospects of fishing in Iceland, as the first is the owner of some nine or ten smacks and the latter is his admiral, as I call him. They are in the habit in May of proceeding to Iceland and fishing off the coast there and landing and selling their catch to the Danish and Icelandic merchants who reside on the Westfjords, but the last three or four years I have bought from them, and when not buying I have assisted them to cure their fish and generally made myself useful to them, so that we are fast friends and I hope someday that I or the company[2] will be able to make something out of these connections. However, we

[1] Lítla Dímun, the smallest of the main Faroe Islands.

[2] At this stage, Pike appears to be working on behalf of the Newfoundland and Labrador Fish and Oil Company Ltd, based in Exeter, rather than the family company.

could not make anything definite but shall meet again in May at Ísafjörður, but the foundation is laid and so must await events later.

They hove up anchor at 10pm after landing the mails. As this is only a mail boat to Faroe and brings no cargo for the islands, we were not detained long and so we slipped out through the islands, through Kalsoy, and once more into the Northern Atlantic, and I slipped once more into my bunk. I fell asleep pretty quickly and did not wake up until late in the morning when I felt a tremendous bump to the ship and heard noises of crashing and banging, and I half out of the bunk. I found out later on that a big sea had hit the ship forwards and had disturbed those plaguing boats again, and this time they were nearly overboard the rail guards. The deck of the ship was smashed and the iron stanchions had pierced the bottoms of the boats, and one of them had a great hole a man could crawl into in her side. It was only the broken stanchions that had saved them from being washed clean overboard, so the vessel had to be put before the sea again and it took them 12 hours to re-secure them. Then away north again against a bitter north gale, and so it went on from Friday night 10 o'clock March 9th until Tuesday morning 10am March 13th, rolling, plunging, staggering and heaving when we should have done the distance in ordinary weather in 38 hours.

The captain has given me a look in once or twice a day just to see how I was getting on, and how he was getting on, and I had asked him if there was any ice on deck.

'Ice! You had better come and see.'

I asked him if he would give me a call before we got into port so I could have a look at it and take a photo if worthwhile, as I suspected there would be a good lot there, as the glass in my porthole was covered with about two inches of ice and a long icicle as big as one's arm was hanging down over the washstand. So he called me in the morning of the 13th and said there was a good light, so I dressed and put on my overcoat and scarf and fur hat and got my camera and up I went. I opened the side door and whiff! In came the strong cold air and nearly took my breath away, so I quickly closed that door and had a gulp or two and then sneaked out of

the leeward door and had a crawl up the windward and looked forward as well as I possibly could in such bitter weather. There was the vessel all on one side, curving and tossing and rolling, then the side just levels with the sea, and on the weather side the great, angry, grey waves lashing at the sides and flinging the spray all over the ship, at times as high as the funnels, the sloping deck all a mass of ice and everything wet or frozen, so I thought, 'Well here goes, I must have that photo.' I got the camera ready and crawled along the deck. It was impossible to stand, at least for me, and I grasped everything I could lay my hands on, which of course wetted my mittens, and then cold wind getting into my lungs after four days and nights in the heated cabin made me gasp for breath. Anyhow, I managed to get a couple of shots and then something went wrong with the pneumatic apparatus of the camera so I had to use the trigger, which necessitated my taking my mittens off and then my troubles began.

I snapped a couple more photos but I was so cold that the shivering of my hands shook up the camera and gave a very poor result. By this time, the air inside the camera had made a steam over the lens and this froze before I discovered it, so out of the number I only got one really decent photo. Captain now called me to come on the bridge but that was more than I could manage. One of the men gave me a hand and I got two or three snaps up there but things were no good, so he gave me a man to get me back to the cabin. I got there properly done up, which was only to be expected after being cooped up in a foetid atmosphere for four days and then getting out suddenly into 30 degrees of frost and facing a gale-force wind and spray lashing like a whip, so when the sailor opened the door and put me inside, I collapsed on the mat and got off my overcoat and scarf and hat and broke into a profuse perspiration. Eventually I got my breath back and crawled down to the cabin.

My fingers had got frost bitten and the steward saw it and got a bucket of ice water and a lump of snow and rubbed and rubbed until circulation began to come into them, and then the pain was just like being hit with a hammer. The difference is that when

you hit your finger with a hammer, you sling it down and say something and then put your finger or thumb in your mouth, but in this case the hammer is there all the time. I fairly cried with the pain and squirmed and wriggled like a worm, but there was no getting away from this pain and the steward would not let go and I said things and stamped and yelled with the pain and my nails got quite black and lasted for three or four days afterwards. Captain said I was lucky not to lose them and I daresay I should have done so, only the steward would not let me go but rubbed like a man. But everything must have an end and the pain began to abate and my fingers began to turn red instead of ghastly white, and I lay down all standing and was soon in a sound sleep.

I awoke to find the ship steadier and I knew then we had got near to somewhere, so I went on deck and found we were approaching Berufjörður, our first place of call. I asked the steward to get me my usual pick-up of ham and eggs and coffee and I was soon over head and ears in comfort, and after it a pipe, and so ended my worst of passages after some 30 voyages up and down at all times of the year.

I found out afterwards, when it was too late, that the pneumatic arrangement had got wet and become frozen and would not work. In developing the photos, I found that after the first two the steam caused by the condensed air and the cold on the lens made a mist over all.

After landing our mails and goods at Berufjörður, we sailed on March 13th for Fáskrúðsfjörður and arrived there during the evening. Very dark and cloudy with occasional snowstorms but hardly any wind. We remained there until daylight and sailed again for Eskifjörður, arriving just at breakfast time on March 14th. Both of these fjords are grand natural harbours some four or five miles from entrance to end and surrounded by high mountains but very few houses. This time of the year the whole is buried in snow.

Sailed again about 1pm for Norðfjörður, which is also a good harbour, the weather very cold and occasional snowstorms but not much wind. I wanted much to go on shore here to see my friends the priest and his wife, as I often stay with them buying

fish, but as the measles were prevalent in the Faroes we were under quarantine. We were not allowed onshore, neither were the people from onshore allowed on board, so we had to content ourselves by shouting our greetings as the priest came off in a boat to see me.

We remained there all night but left again in the early morning and arrived at Seyðisfjörður on March 15th. This is a very long fjord and has a good pier erected at the end by a firm of Englishmen who were going to do a large fishing business but through mismanagement failed, and the Icelanders got, for a nice song, a capital pier to which our vessel was moored. Here the doctor came on board and after questioning if we were sick or had had the measles we were allowed to walk on shore, so I went around and saw my friends and had a yarn with them all.

We left Sunday morning early, March 18th, and had a rather fine passage to Húsavík, rounding the cape of Langanes which is the north coast corner and just inside the Arctic Circle. Langanes is a long low point of rocks and is exceedingly dangerous unless a wide berth is given to it. It was a pretty sight to see the sun shining on the snow and ice-covered mountains, clearly seen 40 or 50 miles away in the clear, bright atmosphere and standing out sharp against a clear, blue sky. We passed Lundey Island and darkness gradually set in, when in the clear sky away to the north a brilliant display of the Aurora or Northern Lights was dancing and flickering about, which Icelanders call the Valkyrie dance. We arrived at Húsavík about 12 midnight and waited until the morning. This is a bad harbour, quite open to the Arctic Ocean.

Left Húsavík on Monday morning about ten o'clock, March 19th, after picking up a good number of passengers, as we were the first mail boat for the year. We had previously got a few from the other places, nearly all of whom I knew, so that the state rooms began to be over full but I, up to this time, had succeeded in not being disturbed by a stable companion. The most of these passengers went on shore at our next stopping place, Akureyri, where we