

Thorsteinsson and Birgitta Guðríður Eiríksdóttir with their children around 1910. From the left: Þórunn, Steinunn, Axel, Þórður and Haraldur.

King Lear, which he finished in 1864 but was not published until 1878. The last and most important of his translations after his homecoming is *Adventures and Stories* by H.C. Andersen which appeared in two volumes in 1904 and 1908. His translations of *Robinson Crusoe* (short version) in 1886 and *Aesop´s Fables* in 1895-1904 also deserve to be mentioned.

Painting of Thorsteinsson on frontpage by Sigurður Guðmundsson.
National Museum of Iceland.
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Steingrímur Thorsteinsson



An exhibition in the National and University Library of Iceland
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Origins, education and work



Thorsteinsson with his son, Bjarni around 1872. National Museum of Iceland.

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson was born at Arnarstapi in Snæfellsnes May 19th 1831 and was brought up in a well-to do home. He was one of four sons of Bjarni Thorsteinsson county governor and Thorunn Hannesdóttir. Steingrímur obtained his baccalaureate from Lærði skólinn in Reykjavík in 1851 and travelled to Copenhagen to study at the University of Copenhagen. Steingrímur moved to Iceland in 1872 and became a teacher at Lærði skólinn in Reykjavík. During the years 1897-1907 he was a member of a committee reviewing the translation of the Old Testament. Haraldur Níelsson did the actual reviewing but bishop Hallgrímur Sveinssson, Þórhallur Bjarnarson and Steingrímur supervised the work. Steingrímur was elected an honorable member of Hið Íslenska Bókmenntafélag in 1901. He continued teaching at Lærði skólinn and became it´s headmaster from 1904 until he died on August 21st 1913. In Copenhagen Steingrímur met his first wife, Lydia Wilstrup. She was about ten years older than Steingrímur, born in Copenhagen December 17th 1821. They had one son. In 1886 Steingrímur inherited a house from his mother, Thorvaldsenstræti 4, and lived there from then on. He added one level/floor to the house and built a nice garden which he took good care of. He remarried in 1890, Birgitta Guðríður Eiríksdóttir (b. 1855, d.1919) who had been a housemaid in his home. She bore him 6 children.

A national poet

Steingrímur Thorsteinsson was, without doubt, one of the national poets of Iceland. Poems by him appeared in journals during his years in Copenhagen and were dear to many younger Icelandic poets. There are many poems by him in the poetry collection Svava which he published in cooperation with Benedikt Gröndal and Gísli Brynjúlfsson in 1860. For almost two decades he was on the editorial board of *Ný Félagsrit* and the journal´s most prominent author. Besides he was the major editor of *Ný sumargjöf*, a journal published in Copenhagen 1859-1865. When Steingrímur was back in Iceland in his 40´s he composed many of his best known poems. He was a firm supporter of Jón Sigurðsson in the nation´s independence movement and his poem "Vorhvöt" exhibits very well his attitude in this conflict. Steingrímur published an anthology of his poetry, Ljóðmæli, in 1881 when he was 50 years old. The anthology was republished in an enhanced edition in1893 at Gyldendal and a third one in 1910 and he was very well respected for his work.



Lydia Wilstrup.



Thorsteinsson and Birgitta Guðríður Eiríksdóttir with their children, Haraldur and Þórunn, around 1900. National Museum of Iceland.

Translations

Steingrímur was a productive translator. He was best known for his translation of *Arabian Nights* (*A Thousand and One Night*). It appeared in many volumes in the years 1857-1864 and the first edition was 1809 pages. The publisher was Páll Sveinsson (1818-1874). The first book with Steingrimur Thorsteinsson´s name on the title page was Páll Sveinsson´s edition of the epic poem *Axel* by Tégner which was published in 1857, the same year as the first volume of *Arabian Nights*. Steingrímur translated many poems by some of Europe´s most prominent poets like Heinrich Heine, Goethe, Schiller and Hoelderlin. He published *Svanhvít* – a few foreign poems in 1877 with translations of poems by him and Matthías Jochumson. He was the first to translate into Icelandic a play by Shakespeare,