

**TRAVELS IN AMERICA 100
YEARS
AGO; BEING NOTES
AND REMINISCENCES**

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Travels in America 100 years ago; Being notes and reminiscences by Thomas Twining

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THOMAS TWINING

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TRAVELS IN AMERICA

100 YEARS AGO

BEING NOTES AND REMINISCENCES

By THOMAS TWINING



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INTRODUCTION

THOMAS TWINING was one of the energetic Englishmen who laid the foundations of the Indian Empire. He arrived in India, as he told his English neighbors in a lecture delivered forty-six years afterwards, a puny boy of sixteen, in 1792. He quitted it finally in 1805, still under thirty. In the interval, to quote his own words, he "had been intrusted with the reform of an extensive department of the public administration, had been appointed judge of a great district, had held the charge of a country containing more than ten thousand towns and villages, and more than two millions of people, and had been received by the Great Mogul on his throne in the old world and by General Washington in the new."

His visit to the United States, almost at the beginning of our national existence, was an episode in his Indian career, occurring in the course of his return to England between two terms of residence

in India. It seems to have been solely a visit of curiosity, and readers of the account of it now presented to the American public will agree that they are much indebted to his curiosity, and to the record that he left of its assuagement. Authentic statements of the impression made upon intelligent and unprejudiced foreigners by the narrow strip of seaboard that virtually constituted the territory of the young republic are not so common that an addition to the short list will not be welcome.

After his return to England Mr. Twining married, and for a time settled in Northamptonshire, but after Waterloo lived with his family for twenty years upon the Continent. Returning to England in 1837, he settled at Twickenham, and died there in 1861.

AMERICA

1795.—The state of my health rendering a voyage to Europe necessary, I determined to proceed by way of America. Accordingly, towards the end of November, I left Santipore, taking with me a small Bengal cow, in addition to my doombah and other curiosities brought from Dehli. The natives would not have consented to sell me a cow if I had not assured them that it would be an object of particular interest and care in the countries I was taking it to. I also had made, by an ingenious workman of Santipore, small, but very exact, models of the principal machines and instruments used in the agriculture and manufactures of India. Among these was a model of an Indian plough, and an excellent one of an Indian loom, with the threads upon it, executed with remarkable

precision and neatness. With all these objects I arrived, by the Ganges, at my old quarters in Captain Thornhill's house.

One of my first visits was to the commander of the American ship *India*, Captain John Ashmead. He was a Quaker; a tall, thin, upright man of about sixty or perhaps sixty-five, in whose respectable and pleasing appearance the usual mildness and simplicity of his sect, with a deep tinge of characteristic peculiarity, were visible. His thin silvery locks curled round the collar of his old-fashioned single-breasted coat, with a row of large plain buttons down the front like a schoolboy's. He introduced me to the supercargo, a Scotchman. The same evening the captain accompanied me to the ship. This I found rather smaller than I had expected. Her measurement was only about 300 tons. But everything on board was seamanlike and neat. The upper deck was flush — that is, level — from head to stern, without any cabin upon it, as in the *Ponsborne*. The lower deck, to which the descent was by a straight ladder from the quarter-deck, had a spacious cabin or dining-room towards the stern, comprehending the whole width of the ship and lighted by the stern windows. I agreed for

the starboard half of this room, consenting to its being separated from the other half by a green baize curtain, which was to be drawn back along a brass rod at the hours of dinner and breakfast. The dining-table was fixed in the middle of the room, and half of it consequently remained in my cabin when the curtain was drawn.

As the ship was to sail in a few days, I had not much time to prepare for my voyage. The American captains having the reputation of keeping rather an indifferent table—living, it was said, principally on salt beef and sour-cROUT—Mr. Fletcher had the goodness to send me ten fat sheep from his flock at Santipore. For these and my cow and doombah, a considerable quantity of hay was necessary. I therefore ordered my servants to buy grass, or rather the *roots* of grass, in the bazaars, and which, being spread and exposed to the sun upon the flat roofs of Captain Thornhill's outhouses, was closely pressed into bundles.

To increase my collection of objects relating to India, I bought, at a sale by auction, some oil-paintings executed by an able European artist. One represented an elephant with a howdah upon his back, kneeling to be