

**AMERICAN LIFE: A NARRATIVE;
OR, TWO YEARS' CITY
AND COUNTRY RESIDENCE IN
THE UNITED STATES. [1842]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649046683

American Life: A Narrative; Or, Two Years' City and Country Residence in the United States.
[1842] by Mrs. Felton

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Cover @ 2017

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MRS. FELTON

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AMERICAN LIFE.

A NARRATIVE

OF

TWO YEARS' CITY AND COUNTRY RESIDENCE

IN THE

UNITED STATES.

BY MRS. FELTON.

Second Thousand.

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.

1842.

Rare Books
Cairns
F
123
F32
1842

P R E F A C E .

IN submitting these few sheets to the public, the authoress wishes to be considered, as presenting a faithful record of her observations, and of events as they occurred within the limits of her experience, during her continuance, for the space of two years, both in the city of New York and at her residence in the country.

Whenever she has felt herself called upon to give an opinion, she has endeavoured impartially to comply; and when, in delineating characters, she has been compelled to draw upon fiction for names, in order to avoid inflicting an injury by an unnecessary exposure; it may be concluded with certainty, that the *names alone are fictitious*, and that the individuals there represented, are correctly depicted in their proper colours.

While employed in preparing this small volume

for the press, that opinion, so frequently expressed by the Americans, has often occurred to her: viz. "That should a book be written on their country, containing truth in its unalloyed simplicity, it would for ever lie on the shelves of the bookseller, as no encouragement would be given in England, to any publication on *such a subject*, unless it were rendered palatable by libels and falsehoods." Although sufficiently convinced herself, of the fallacy of this notion, it has still had some influence in inducing as much caution, as if these pages were about to be submitted as a test to decide the fate of some such experiment.

She has endeavoured throughout, so to unite amusement with useful information, as to make this volume desirable both as a book of utility to the emigrant, and as a volume of entertainment, to those who prefer viewing the other side the Atlantic through the safer medium of the press. How far she has succeeded, must be left to the judgement of a discerning public to determine.

AMERICAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOYAGE.

THE day on which we sailed was clear and serene, and we gently drifted with the tide down Belfast Lough into the Channel. Assured that I should not be able to see land on the following morning, I kept my eyes fixed upon the hills in the distance, till darkness rendered them no longer visible. I never undertake a voyage or a journey, without a vague feeling of melancholy—there is something strangely depressing in the preliminaries of departure; the packing of boxes—the arrangement of books, clothes, and papers—the whole valedictory ceremony has in it something very oppressive, and always excites sensations of sadness.—Indeed, I seldom visit a place, even for a few

weeks, without meeting with some agreeable associates, whose company I feel loath to relinquish, and sometimes find this impracticable, without attesting my emotions by tears. These, however, form an inadequate representation of the state of my mind at a time when I was leaving the shores of Europe, with the prospect of a long, and perhaps, a final separation. But in this instance, these unpleasant sensations were greatly alleviated, by considering that the presence of those whom I hold dearer than all other earthly treasures, was with me in the vessel; I mean my husband and my children.

The next morning, we found ourselves going at a rapid rate under the influence of a gale, far too brisk for personal comfort. Our vessel was rather small, but she was, what is termed by sailors "a good sea-boat;" and for that reason alone, on account of her pitching and rolling, very unpleasant for passengers. The whole of the company in the cabin were distressingly affected with nausea, and so long as this gale lasted, we were quite in a passive and suffering condition.

This distressing concomitant of a long voyage

affects individuals variously, according to their ages, constitutions, and previous habits of life. My personal sufferings were very severe, and were augmented by the care of an infant of six months. I had a servant on board, but she required as much attention from the steward as myself: and I now discovered, to my great inconvenience, what I had frequently heard others affirm,—that very few servants indeed, whatever be their representations, are capable of performing their duties, during the first week of a voyage.

The next day the gale increased to something like a storm, and for safety, I was recommended to retire to my berth. While lying there, helpless and almost in an inanimate state, a box which had escaped my notice containing a compass, fell from a small shelf just above my head, and struck me a violent blow with its sharp corner, upon my temples. From the weight of the box, it was supposed that, had my head reclined only one-fourth of an inch in another direction, the consequences must have been fatal: my infant also had a narrow escape, having been removed from my side only a few minutes before. I suffered much however, as it was, but

I ought eternally to acknowledge, with lively feelings of gratitude, this merciful interposition of an over-ruling Providence in my favour.

During the continuance of this storm or gale, all the passengers on board without a single exception were laid aside—the assistance of a female could not be obtained either for love or for money. There we lay, helpless in our berths, and I think, I never partook of food for upwards of two days: nor was my case in this respect, by any means singular. I have performed long voyages both before and since, and have always been similarly affected.

I would earnestly recommend families going abroad, who are anxious to secure the advantage of a surgeon, to require a personal interview with the individual who is to act in that capacity; particularly if they sail from a foreign port. Such a precaution would frequently prevent much disappointment, as the person who is introduced as “the doctor,” not unfrequently turns out to be some smith or barber, redolent of rum, and dressed in shabby black: and perhaps appearances will not be found much improved by his conversational talents.