

TRAVELS IN INDIA  
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO



*Thomas Twining, 1776 - 1861.*

Rare section

TRAVELS IN INDIA  
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

WITH

A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

BEING NOTES AND REMINISCENCES BY

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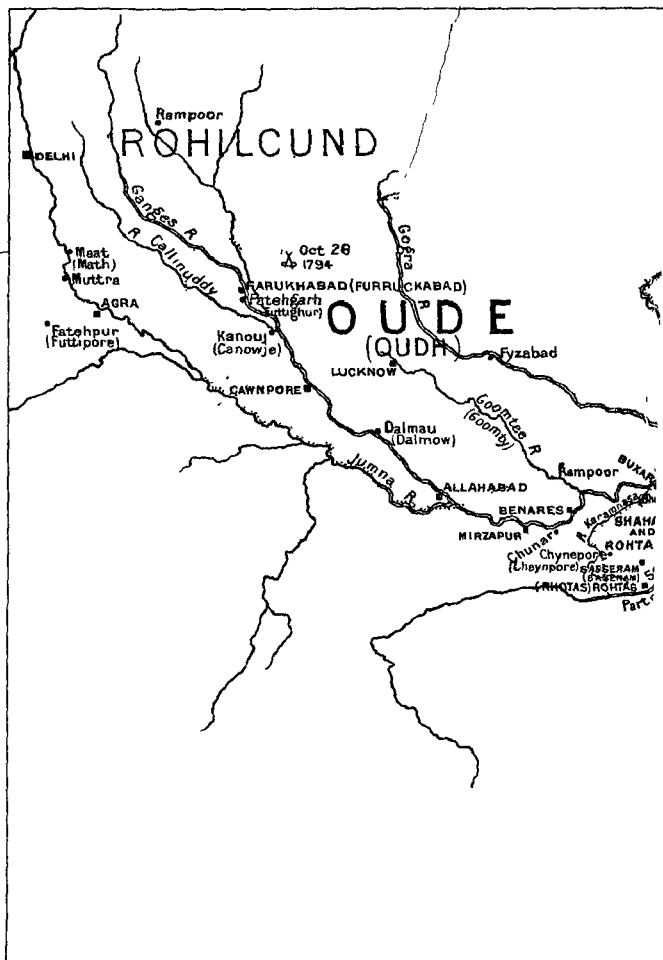
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LEADING INCIDENTS OF THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR SUBSEQUENT  
TO HIS INDIAN CAREER, BY HIS SON, THOMAS TWINING,  
PERRYN HOUSE, TWICKENHAM.

*July 1393*

It was in the spring of 1805 that my father definitively returned to England, obliged by the effects of the climate of India to close prematurely a brilliant career in the civil service of the East India Company. That this decision was not by any means come to through want of encouraging patronage and brilliant offers has been seen by the account of the last interview with Lord Wellesley at Calcutta, given at p. 523<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately my father had become too much a prey to the usual liver complaint to encounter another hot season, and, indeed, a letter addressed to his father during his homeward voyage had quite the character of a farewell. His complaint took however a favourable turn, and after his return to England his recovery must have proceeded with remarkable rapidity, for before the end of the year he appears to have been making a pleasure tour in the eastern counties. He there made the acquaintance of my dear mother, Elizabeth Gifford, to whom he was married on 21st January 1806. I was born on 28th December of that year.

My earliest recollections are connected with travelling, for my father and mother visited most of our health and pleasure resorts

<sup>1</sup> That Lord Cornwallis was equally well disposed towards my father is shown by the following extract from a letter addressed by his lordship to my grandfather —

“You are perfectly right in believing that your son requires no other introduction to me than his own talents and his meritorious conduct. I shall be glad to renew my acquaintance with him, and to show him every mark of my esteem and regard — I have, etc. etc.  
CORNWALLIS.”

before settling in the autumn of 1810 at Spratton Place, in a village of that name near Northampton. His happiness, which may be said to have culminated there, was blasted in the most melancholy way by the death of my dear mother on the 17th December, from scarlet fever, caught in visiting the poor of the village. This event cast a gloom over the whole remainder of my father's life.

It was quite natural that in the following lonely years my father should by degrees be drawn, for the sake of exercise and intercourse, to associate with the fox-hunting community by which he was surrounded. The attractive qualities which had gained so much favour in India soon rendered him conspicuous, to say nothing of the fact that two of his horses were among the most noted clearers of five-barred gates. By 1813 he had before him the prospect of a sub-lieutenancy, but prudent forethought convinced him that a career of this kind was beyond what could be safely managed with a fortune which his premature departure from India had not allowed to attain to full growth, and in August of that year he left Spratton to resume quiet visits to attractive health resorts.

In front of Spratton Place there was a row of posts connected with chains. A short time before leaving, my father was sitting on one of these chains and conversing with a farmer of the neighbourhood, when suddenly the post to his right snapped near the bottom, and fell with violence against his hip-joint. The incident was thought little of, but had very serious results. Long walks on the Downs at Eastbourne brought on a lameness which confined him to his bed during the following winter, spent at Tunbridge Wells, and the summer of 1814, spent at Sydenham. It was not till 1815, whilst lodging at Brompton to be near the celebrated surgeon, Mr Copeland, that he was enabled to resume exercise, and then only with the aid of crutches, which for many years were his inséparable companions. This infirmity did not prevent his availing himself of the definitive downfall of the Emperor Napoleon after the battle of Waterloo, for transferring his abode to those varied and interesting regions of the European Continent of which the enjoyment had so long been denied to Englishmen.

His companions were.—myself, born in 1806, my brother Henry, born in 1808; our sister Elizabeth, born 1809, our tutor and two maid servants.

A travelling landau was sent from London to Brighton, where we were staying in the autumn of 1815. It was one of those com-

plete vehicles that are now scarcely ever seen, and in its peregrinations, as far as Naples, did ample honour to the reputation enjoyed by British artisans for good workmanship.

It was about the beginning of November that we started with post-horses for Dover, whence the crossing of the Channel was effected in one of the small cutter-rigged vessels which then sufficed for the incipient efforts of Channel navigation. The weather was not such as to give any trouble nowadays, but it sufficed to throw the cutter on the Calais Sands, where it remained with the waves beating over it till it was left dry by the receding tide. My father was then placed in an arm-chair and hoisted over the vessel's side, and we reached without mishap the fine old hotel, "Dessin," noted through its mention in Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*

A short stay at Brussels presented nothing worth mentioning, save an excursion to the battlefield of Waterloo, and the long stretch of posting to Paris was at that dismal season of the year rendered more cheerless by the presence of the Prussian troops playing the conquerors. The allied occupation gave even Paris during that winter an aspect of gloom which for us harmonised but too well with a family affliction; Sister Elizabeth died in January 1816, leaving a blank which had, wherever we went, the effect of diminishing our social intercourse.

The summer of 1816 was marked by excursions to Tours and Fontainebleau, but a much more important enterprise marked the autumn of that year, namely, a journey with post-horses all the way to Naples, a feat involving more than once the necessity for an escort of two Austrian dragoons, as protection against the banditti, who at that time were flourishing. I may mention in this respect that after staying three days on our return northward in a romantic part of the Apennines, our host very considerably warned us that the intelligence of the presence of English travellers was spreading in the neighbourhood, and that his house would probably be attacked if we remained there, which of course we gratefully avoided to do.

Having returned to Paris in 1817, we became comfortably located for some years at the Hôtel de Mayence, in a pleasant part of the Rue St Honoré, and I thus had the opportunity of acquiring a taste for science, of which the chief branches were taught at the Athénée Royal by first-rate professors, in courses of a commonsense, utilitarian character still much wanted in England.

To this period of scientific training succeeded, from 1820-1822,

a period of classical education under regular English tutors at St Germain-en-laye, where we had a country-house which had a large garden ; to say nothing of the delightful rides in the Bois, for which that place is famous. These rides my father enjoyed the more for having received from England one of his best Northamptonshire hunters. He was still obliged to walk with crutches, but could ride freely, and his health was good. This circumstance and the absence of social intercourse naturally inclined him for his own sake, and that of his boys, to develop on a larger scale the knowledge of countries and nationalities. In April 1822 we began a journey to the banks of the Rhine, which formed a very suitable prelude to the picturesque beauties of the Lake of Lucerne. On 11th September we reached Milan, and had no difficulty in establishing ourselves in comfortable winter quarters.

Thus was initiated a plan, maintained by my father during the remainder of his continental life, of spending, as a rule, the summer in Switzerland and the winter at a first-rate city, such as Milan or Paris.

Milan found constant favour as a well-built, well-paved, and cleanly city. Its climate, owing to the propinquity of the Alps, is generally severe in winter, but for this very reason means of warmth and comfort abound, which Englishmen are apt to miss in the Italian cities farther south. Educational advantages and enjoyments were on a first-rate footing. I had good opportunities of cultivating my taste for music. My brother's talent for painting obtained important development through a course of lessons, received in our first winter's stay, from the eminent landscape painter, Marco Gozzi, and through copying, in subsequent years, the admirable collection of his works at the Brera, proceeds of a munificent yearly subvention from the Austrian Government.

In the numerous winters subsequently spent at Paris, our retired mode of life presented less varied attractions than might be supposed, and the distance from Interlaken, our summer abode, was a serious inconvenience.

Travelling was in those days a very different business from what steam has made it now. It required four awful days and nights of uninterrupted posting to travel from Paris to Interlaken and *vice versa*. Under such circumstances it is no wonder that our desire to lead a settled life in England went on increasing, and got the better of all other considerations in 1837.

A period of transition was afforded by our going in the spring of that year, *via* Havre and Southampton, to Weymouth, where we remained about a year. Our expectations of it as a seaside resort were fully justified, and to our other enjoyments was added a useful initiation in the movement, then in active development, of popular improvement through the instrumentality of so-called "Mechanics' Institutes." My father was induced to favour the Weymouth Mechanics' Institute with discourses on his Indian experiences, which created quite a sensation. It was in March 1838 that we sought for a definitive home in the neighbourhood of the metropolis. Twickenham united in an unparalleled degree intrinsic attractions with family associations. We took provisionally a house at the water-side, near the well-known Ferry, and by a most fortunate chance my father was very soon able to purchase from the descendants of Judge Perryn the mansion and grounds of Perryn House. He soon proved that he was the right man in the right place, by liberally contributing to the erection of Trinity Church, and having been appointed in 1841 one of H M Justices of the Peace, he devoted himself with such intelligent energy to the duties of his office that his "Justice Room" became appreciated far and wide by the police as an ever-ready and ever-satisfactory resource. He disposed of no less than 970 cases up to 1847, when advanced age induced him to resign amid tokens of the highest appreciation. He died on 25th December 1861.

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