

Trim

Matthew Flinders



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A biographical tribute to the memory of Trim by
Matthew Flinders

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*To the memory of Trim,
the best and most illustrious of his race,
the most affectionate of friends,
faithful of servants,
and best of creatures.*

*He made the tour of the globe,
and a voyage to Australia,
which he circumnavigated,
and was ever the delight and pleasure
of his fellow voyagers.*

*Returning to Europe in 1803, he was ship-
wrecked in the Great Equinoxial Ocean;*

This danger escaped, he sought refuge and assistance at the Isle of France, where he was made prisoner, contrary to the laws of Justice, of Humanity, and of French National Faith; and where alas! he terminated his useful career, by an untimely death, being devoured by the Catophagi of that island.

Many a time have I beheld his little meriments with delight, and his superior intelligence with surprise:

Never will his like be seen again!

Trim was born in the Southern Indian Ocean, in the year 1799, and perished as above at the Isle of France in 1804.

Peace be to his shade, and Honour to his memory.

I can never speak of cats without a sentiment of regret for my poor Trim, the favourite of all our ship's company on the *Spyall*. This good-natured purring animal was born on board His Majesty's ship the *Roundabout* in 1799 during a passage from the Cape of Good Hope to Botany Bay; and saving the rights and titles of the Parish of Stepney, was consequently an Indian by birth. The signs of superior intelligence which marked his infancy procured for him an education beyond what is usually bestowed upon the individuals of his tribe; and being brought up amongst sailors, his manner acquired a peculiarity of cast which rendered them as different from those of other cats as the actions of a fearless seaman are from

those of a lounging, shame-faced ploughboy. It was, however; from his gentleness and the innate goodness of his heart that I gave him the name of my uncle Toby's honest, kind-hearted, humble companion.

In playing with his little brothers and sisters upon deck by moonlight, when the ship was lying tranquilly in harbour, the energy and elasticity of his movements sometimes carried him so far beyond his mark that he fell overboard; but this was far from being a misfortune; he learned to swim and to have no dread of water; and when a rope was thrown over to him, he took hold of it like a man, and ran up it like a cat. In a short time he was able to mount up the gangway steps

quicker than his master, or even than the first lieutenant.

Being a favourite with everybody on board, both officers and seamen, he was well fed, and grew fast both in size and comeliness. A description of his person will not be misplaced here. From the care that was taken of him, and the force of his own constitution, Trim grew to be one of the finest animals I ever saw. His size emulated that of friends of Angora: his weight being from ten to twelve pounds, according as our fresh-meatometer stood high or low. His tail was long, large and bushy; and when he was animated by the presence of a stranger of the anti-catean race, it bristled out to a fearful size,

whilst vivid flashes darted from his fiery eyes, though at other times he was candour and good-nature itself. His head was small and round — his physiognomy bespoke intelligence and confidence — his whiskers were long and graceful, and his ears were cropped in a beautiful curve. Trim's robe was a clear jet black, the exception of his four feet, which seemed to have been dipped in snow, and his under-lip, which rivalled them in whiteness. He also a white star on his breast, and it seemed as if nature designed him for the prince and model of his race. I doubt whether Whittington's cat, of which so much has been said and written, was to be compared to him.