

No 35
Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel J. Mills, Late Missionary
to the south western section of the United States, & Agent
of the American Colonization Society.

Next to the devotions of the closet, & the perusal of the
Holy Scriptures, there are few means of advancement in the
divine life better adapted to their end, than a familiar ac-
quaintance with the lives of godly men. Who that has traced the
footsteps of some favoured child of mercy through all the trials &
discouragements of the Christian life, has not been eager to catch
his falling mantle, & bless the Father of mercies for raising up
men to shine as lights in the world, & to shed a lustre through a
long line of succeeding generations. No inconsiderable portion
of this hallowed feeling will, it is believed, be excited by contemplating
the character of the late Samuel J. Mills.

It was the privilege of this beloved man to be the child
of pious parents. He was the son of a venerable clergyman,
whose praise is in the churches, & who is now the pastor of a respec-
table congregation in the town of Torrington, in the county of dit-
=chfield, State of Connecticut. His mother was the daughter of Sa-
=muel Robbins, of a respectable family originally from Weatherfield,
in Hartford county, in the same State. She was a woman of very
exemplary character & her eminent piety, & one whose memory
is embalmed in the hearts of all who knew her. Samuel was their
third child, & was born the 21st of April. 1783.

The childhood & youth of Mr. Mills were chiefly spent under
his father's roof, in the possession of the most faithful instruction,
& of the best kind, until the year 1798, when his attention was
happily arrested, during a season of the outpouring of the

Holy Spirit upon his native town. Young Mills was then fifteen years of age. Naturally very retired & he was least disposed to say much concerning the exercises of his own mind.

With some apparent mitigation of his distress, he left his father's house for a week lodging town, to take charge of a farm that had been bequeathed him by his maternal grandmother.

In November 1801, he returned home with the view of spending the winter at an Academy in the town of Litchfield, about twelve miles off, but with no repose to his depressed & troubled mind. On the morning of his departure for Litchfield, ever anxious for her son, & never more than now, his mother took an opportunity of inquiring into the state of his mind, & begged him to make an ingenious disclosure of his feelings. For a moment he was silent & wept, but his heart was too full, long to suppress the emotions produced by so affecting a request. He raised his head, & with eyes streaming with tears, exclaimed, "O that I had never been born; O that I had never been born, For two years I have been sorry God ever made me." What reply could such a mother make to such a disclosure? It was given her in that same house what ^{she} should speak. My son, said she, you are born, & you can never throw off your existence, nor your everlasting accountability for all your conduct. This heavy thought was like a dagger to his soul. Though from Mr. Mills's letters, his friends were induced to hope that some change had taken place in his views, he himself however was conscious of no hope, till about three months after this period. "Verily, it shall be said to Jacob & to Israel, What hath God wrought."

Mr. Mills became a member of Williams, College, in Massachusetts in the autumn of 1806. & while a member of the college, there was a revival of religion in that Institution, of which he was the chief instrument. The following spring, Mr. Mills became a member of the Theological Seminary at Andover.

Among the projects in which Mr. Mills took a deep interest, & which was the first in his own estimation at the time it was conceived, was the design of propagating the Gospel among the Heathen in foreign lands, by means of Missionaries from this country. With fervent gratitude to the God of grace let it be acknowledged, that he was pleased to smile upon the designs of Mr. Mills & his associates, in turning the hearts of the Churches toward the favourite object. There was laid the corner stone of an edifice, which will long be the ornament of the American Church, & was its foundation, beautiful its superstructure, lofty its name.

Mr. Mills received ordination as a gospel minister, at Newburyport, Massachusetts, in company with Messrs. Richards, Bardwell, Lorr, & Warren, on the 21st of June, 1815, all destined to Missionary services. Shortly after his ordination, Mr. Mills began to make preparations for several Missionary tours through the western & southern sections of the united States. The first in the years 1812 & 1813, & the last in the years 1814 & 1815. The principal objects of this Mission were to preach the gospel to the destitute - to explore the country & learn its moral & religious state - & to promote the establishment of Bible Societies, & of other religious & charitable institutions.

In a statement of his labours on this mission, Mr. Mills says:
South of New Connecticut, few Bibles, or religious tracts have been recei-
-ved for distribution among the inhabitants. The Sabbath is greatly
profaned, & but few good people can be found in any one place.
From Cincinnati, Mr. Sherman & myself went down the river
this to Lawrenceburg in the Indiana Territory, preaching occasionally.
We found the inhabitants in a very destitute state, very ignorant
of the doctrines of the Gospel, & in many instances, without Bibles.

We proceeded on our way to Nashville, in Tennessee, where we arrived
the 28th. From here it was thought best, being to descend the river. General
Jackson was expected to go in a few days, with about 1500 volunteers, to Natchez.
We were introduced to the General, who, having become acquainted with our
design, invited us to take passage on board his boat. We left Natchez the
12th of March, & arrived at New-Orleans the 19th. The distance is
500 miles. For the distance of 100 miles above New-Orleans, the banks
of the river appear like one continued village. The greater part of the in-
-habitants are strenuous Catholics, ignorant of almost every thing except what
relates to the increase of their property, destitute of schools, Bibles, & religious
instructions. Upon our arrival at New-Orleans, we were soon made acquaint-
-ed with a few religious people. There is no protestant church in the
city. Attempts have been made to build one, but have failed.

Soon after our arrival, we introduced the subject of a Bible
Society. It directly met the wishes of the religious people with
whom we had become acquainted. We found however that, in order
to have the Bible circulate freely, especially among the
Catholics, the consent of those high in office must be
obtained, this was also granted.

On the last of these missions, Mr. Mills left Boston in July.
18th We went on to Connecticut, where he found the Rev. Mr. Smith, &
engaged him to be his companion on the tour. They succeeded on their
journey, followed by the prayers of many of the friends of Zion. In
the interior of the state of Pennsylvania, they found extensive tracts
of country, & especially the valleys between the Alleghany Mountains,
exceedingly destitute of religious privileges. Throughout the country
north of the Ohio River, there was a lamentable want both of Bibles
& Missionaries. They became instrumental in the formation of Bible
Societies in Pennsylvania, in the Indiana, Illinois, & Missouri Territories.
Speaking of the State of Louisiana, they say, There are American
families in this part of our country, who never saw a Bible,
nor heard of Jesus Christ. It is a fact that ought not to be forgotten,
that so late as March, 1815, a Bible in any language could not be
found, for sale, or to be given away, in New-Orleans. And yet eight
thousand Bibles would not supply the destitute of that State.

On this second visit to New-Orleans, Mr. Mills did much
to relieve the desolations discovered on his former tour, & especially in
the distribution of the Holy Scriptures. As early as the first
of March, fifteen or sixteen hundred copies of the Testaments
had been given out. In the Spring of 1811, eight or
ten thousand of the inhabitants of St. Domingo
came to this part of our country. Most of them
remained in New-Orleans, many of them are
about to return to St. Domingo, & will take with
them the Testaments, where the sacred Scriptures
have rarely, if ever, been introduced. Some
copies have been sent to the Havana, in
the island of Cuba.

Soon after his return from his European tour, Mr. Mills left New-England, & took up his residence in the Middle States. Here he spent two of the most profitable years of his life, unobscured & almost unknown, yet silently exercising an influence, & setting in motion several illustrious plans of mercy to mankind. Among these was the establishment of a National Bible Society. And it is but justice to say the plan of the existing American Bible Society originated in the bosom of Mr. Mills. He continued to take a deep interest in the formation of the Bible Society, & to use all his exertions with his friends in favour of it, until the very day arrived on which it was organized. It was on the 5th day of May, 1816, a day to be long remembered in the annals of the American people.

Again the formation of a Foreign Missionary Society, will be esteemed one of the grandest objects which has ever been effected. Next to the Spirit of God upon his heart, Mr. Mills was also the prime mover in this business. This new Missionary Field, as it has been justly styled, discloses a picture of pollution & misery which we little expected to behold. From an interesting document not long since submitted to the public, it appears, that not less than 60,000 persons, in the city of New-York, 18,000 in the town of Boston, upwards of 50,000 in the city of Philadelphia, between 30 & 40,000 in Baltimore, & upwards of 10,000 in Charleston, are liberally destitute of the privileges of the gospel, & in a state of wretched ignorance & deep impiety. Upwards of 700,000 also in London, & 80,000 in Liverpool are in the same deplorable ignorance, which in Great Britain & on the continent, most other cities are in no better, & many of them are in a much worse condition.

The darling object of Mr. Mills remains yet to be made known. It was that, in the prosecution of which he found a watery grave. The civil, moral, & spiritual degradation of the children of Africa, both in this land of civilization & christianity, & their own native regions of darkness, lay with continual weight upon his mind. All his measures in behalf of this depressed race, seem to have been adopted & pursued with a kind of supernatural assurance, that the time was not far distant when the galling chains of African bondage should be broken & under the mild reign of the Prince of Peace, Ethiopia should be lifted from her degeneracy, & stretch out her hands unto God. The matter was brought before the synod of New-York, & New-Jersey, at their annual meeting in October, 1816. A committee was appointed to examine the subject. Who at the same session adopted a system of regulations.

Soon after the formation of the Society, much began to be said publicly in favour of the attempt to send the free people of colour to the western coast of Africa. With a view to obviate this embarrassment, it was resolved to commission persons of suitable qualifications to explore the western coast of Africa. This commission, delicate as it was with responsibility was put into the hands of Mr. Mills. Arrangements were made for him to sail in the ship *Electra*, a merchant's vessel bound from Philadelphia to London. Mr. Mills left America on the 16th of November, 1817, & after a short & perilous voyage arrived in England late in December. After adjusting all their concerns in England, they embarked for Africa on the 2nd of February, 1818.

We left London on the 2th of February, & on the 7th sailed from the Downs. For eighteen days we encountered head winds & strong gales, & made slow progress. On the 25th we had a distinct view of Cape Finisterre, in Spain. On the 6th of March we passed Palma & other Canary islands. And on the 19th we anchored near the village St. Marys, situated on Banyan Point. It is an infant settlement commenced only two years ago. The people were cheerful, & generally employed in some kind of labour. They were mostly Africans, the number of Europeans is about thirty.

There is, as yet, no attention paid to literary or moral instruction, hence, the internal improvement of the place will be very slow, unless some humane society afford their aid. The more we learn of Africa, the more confident we are that the plan of the American Colonization Society will eventually succeed. We obtain increasing proofs of the fertility of the soil, & ascertain a greater variety of the productions of the country. If the slave trade, that mother of abominations, & source of woes unutterable, can be annihilated, Africa will revive & assume a respectable rank among the nations of the earth. We visited the schools in Freetown. In the male school were about 200 neat, active, intelligent boys. In the female school were about 100 neatly dressed little girls, many of whom could read & sew. There was not a white child in either of them. I believe schools of white children seldom give fairer proofs of good improvement. The number in all the schools in the colony, including some adults, does not fall much short of two thousand. This is about one sixth part of the whole population.

I have now visited most of the villages in the colony. The population of the colony is nearly twelve thousand. The schools are in a flourishing state, accommodating nearly two thousand children. Each village has a superintendent, who is a clergyman or schoolmaster. Each village has a place of worship, where prayers are made, morning & evening, in the presence of the people. The sabbath is observed through the colony. The governor is justly esteemed as a father & patron of the colony. He makes great exertions for its improvement. I am every day more convinced of the practicality & expediency of establishing American colonies on this coast. We have taken an affectionate leave of the clergymen, the civil officers, & the colonists of Sierra Leone. We are embarked for the United States, by way of England, & the continent of Africa recedes from our view. While in Africa, Mr. Hills was exclusively devoted to the objects of his agency, diligent, unwearied, watchful, persevering in season & out of season, almost to a fault.

Having finished his inquiries in Africa, & become convinced that he could do no more to promote the objects of the American Society, as there was no American ship in the vicinity, he improved the only opportunity for leaving the coast before the rainy season should set in with violence, & took passage for London, on the 22^d of May, 1818. During the early part of his voyage after he left the coast,

he was employed in transcribing his course papers, & employing every thing that was of importance to his agency. On the evening of June the 5th two weeks after he sailed from Sierra Leone, he took a heavy cold, became ill, & expressed some apprehensions of a fever. On Saturday, the 12th, he sat up a part of the day, but was in considerable pain, & very restless. On Sunday, the 13th, he had little or no fever, & was very comforted & much refreshed. He conversed freely on religion topics, & could not rest satisfied without it. On Monday, the 15th he had a restless night, the hiccup was painful, & almost incessant. He had still considerable strength, sat up some, & even walked across the cabin.

On Tuesday morning the hiccup abated. He slept, with short intervals of wakefulness. About noon he spoke with some freedom, & his sentiments were full of piety & trust in God. Death had no terrors. He seemed to be looking forward to the immediate presence & enjoyments of God in heaven, & to be in constant expectancy of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undimmed, & that fadeth not away. Between 2 & 3 P. M. his hiccup ceased. There was no convulsion - no deep groan -

He gently closed his hands on his breast, as if to engage in some act of devotion - & a celestial smile settled upon his countenance, & every feature expressed the serenity & meekness of his soul, he ceased to breathe -

Mark the righteous man, & behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace. Thus, in the thirty-fifth year of his age, did this beloved man close his life of distinguished piety & usefulness, & leave Africa & the world to mourn.

As the sun was going down, all on board assembled with great seriousness - when his body was deposited beneath the mighty waters, there to rest till that great day, when the sea shall give up his dead.