

**MEMOIRS OF CAPTAIN JAMES WILSON,
CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS
ENTERPRISES AND SUFFERINGS IN INDIA, HIS
CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY, HIS
MISSIONARY VOYAGE TO THE SOUTH SEAS,
AND HIS PEACEFUL AND TRIUMPHANT DEATH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649646388

Memoirs of Captain James Wilson, Containing an Account of His Enterprises and Sufferings in India, His Conversion to Christianity, His Missionary Voyage to the South Seas, and His Peaceful and Triumphant Death by John Griffin

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JOHN GRIFFIN

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First American Edition,

COMPRISING AN

APPENDIX.

OF
USEFUL AND INTERESTING MISSIONARY PAPERS.

BOSTON:
SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, AND CROCKER & BREWSTER,
NEW YORK:—JOHN P. HAVEN.

1822.



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An engraved likeness of POMAREE, king of Otaheite.

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MEMOIRS
OF
CAPTAIN JAMES WILSON.

PART I.

From the Early Youth of the Captain, to his settling at Horndean, in Hampshire.

THE representation of truth through the medium of historic fact and biographical incident, has always proved more interesting to a very numerous class of readers, than when presented in an abstract and didactic form.

Biography exhibits principles in operation, and shows the doctrine and its evidence in one view. The reading of it gives scope for the exercise of nearly all the powers of the soul, at the same time. The imagination presents to the mind, the object, place, and occurrence, as though before the eye; the understanding associates ideas, examines and traces causes and effects, and draws its conclusions, while the passions are excited, in a degree proportioned to the interesting nature of the narrative. If its subjects be moral or religious, the conscience

also is employed, and gives a point and personal application to truth, highly beneficial to the reader. Thus biography, while it affords entertainment, is suited to impart instruction, and improve the heart.

It is from the interest the human mind feels in historic representation, that dramatic writing obtains such an extensive and almost universal popularity. The religious as well as the fashionable world, has its dramas; and fact and fiction are so blended in some books, as to render it necessary to guard our young people against supposing that all is fiction. It is neither my province nor my intention, to decide on the propriety or impropriety of this mode of writing, but I may express my fears, lest there should be such a degree of it, as may introduce a levity of character into the most serious part of society, and by the number of such books facilitate the transition from the love of religious to that of fashionable novels. By giving too much employment to the fancy, faith is embarrassed, and the understanding is weakened. Perhaps the best way to prevent a redundancy of this kind of composition, is to present the religious world with authentic narratives of real life; to exhibit facts as they occur, without the aid of an imaginary scenery to increase the interest of the representation.

It it should be thought that these remarks seem like an apology for writing the following Memoir, I would say, it is not denied; but they afford likewise an opportunity to assure the reader, that fiction is in no instance called to aid or embellish the interesting narrative which is here presented of the life of Captain James Wilson.

Dr. Haweis thought the Captain's life so eventful and instructive, that he has appended a well-written, though brief account, of the early part of it, to his three volumes of Church History. This account has been since printed by some booksellers, in a de-

tached, but mutilated form, and very extensively circulated through the country. The avidity with which that tract was read, and the lively interest many have taken in the Captain's life, have induced his friends to think, that a more enlarged and correct account of his conversion from Deism to Christianity, and from a state of unregeneracy to a state of vital godliness, is highly desirable.

I have given the part of his life previous to his conversion, with some corrections and additions, which subsequent conversation with the Captain suggested, nearly in the language of his much esteemed friend. The Doctor entitles his account, "Memoirs of the leadings of Divine Providence, in the call of Captain James Wilson to the work of conducting the South Sea Mission."

As the work of God in general, and the Missionary Society in particular, are so highly indebted to the noble and disinterested services of Captain James Wilson, I wish to record his name among the worthies, who in spreading the Gospel among the heathen, deserve to be held in especial remembrance. The singular wisdom and prudence with which he discharged his trust, and the uncommon success which crowned his labors, through the whole of his long and perilous voyage, are a fresh manifestation of the care and keeping of that gracious Lord who had so often before, and in such a wonderful manner, led him by a way which he knew not; preserved him amidst deaths oft, and dangers so peculiar; and after bearing with him in his rebellion and insensibility, having chosen him from the beginning for himself, prepared him by a series of preceding providences for that work which he was so peculiarly qualified to fulfil.

Captain James Wilson was the youngest son of nineteen children. His father was commander of a