

**NARRATIVES OF  
COLORED  
AMERICANS**

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Narratives of colored Americans by Abigail Mott

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**ABIGAIL MOTT**

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COLORED  
AMERICANS**



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OF  
COLORED AMERICANS.

By Mrs. Abigail Field Mott

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God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."—ACTS xvii., 26.

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The Trustees have had "The Power of Religion on the Mind, in Retirement, Affliction, and at the approach of Death," stereotyped, and several thousand copies printed and distributed.

They also publish the following Narratives compiled by A. Mott, and M. S. Wood, believing they will prove acceptable reading to our Colored Americans.

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### PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

IN 1761 John Wheatley's wife went to the slave market in Boston, for a girl whom she might train to wait upon her in her old age. At that time ships were sent from Boston to Africa after cargoes of slaves, which were sold to the people of Massachusetts. Among a group of more robust and healthy children just imported from Africa, the lady observed one of slender form, suffering from change of climate and the miseries of the voyage. She was interested in the poor little girl, bought her, and took her home. The child, who was named Phillis, was almost naked, her only covering being a strip of dirty carpet; but in a short time the effects of comfortable clothing and food were visible in her returning health.

Phillis at the time of her purchase was between seven and eight years of age, and the intention of her mistress was to train her as a servant; but the intelligence which the young girl soon exhibited, induced her mistress's daughter to teach her to read. Such was the rapidity with which she learned, that in sixteen months from the time of her arriving in the family, the African child had so mastered the English

language, to which she was an utter stranger before, that she could read with ease the most difficult parts of the Bible. Her uncommon intellect altered the intentions of the family regarding Phillis, and she was kept about the person of her mistress, whose affection she won by her amiable disposition and pleasing manners. All her knowledge was obtained without any instruction, except what was given her in the family; and in four years from the time she was stolen from Africa, and when only twelve years of age, she was capable of writing letters to her friends on various subjects.

The young colored girl became an object of very general attention and astonishment; and in a few years she corresponded with several persons in high stations. As she grew up to womanhood, her attainments kept pace with the promise of her earlier years; the literary people of Boston supplied her with books and encouraged her intellectual powers. This was greatly assisted by her mistress, who treated her like a child of the family, admitted her to her own table, and introduced her as an equal to the best society; but Phillis never departed from the humble and unassuming deportment which distinguished her when she stood a little trembling child for sale in the slave market. She respected the prejudice against her color, and, when invited to the tables of the great or wealthy, she chose a place apart for herself, that none might be offended at a thing so unusual as sitting at table with a woman of color.

Such was the modest and amiable disposition of Phillis Wheatley. She studied Latin, and her translations show that she made considerable progress in it; and she wrote poetry. At the age of fourteen she appears to have first attempted literary composition, and by the time she was nineteen the whole of her printed poems appear to have been written. They were published in London in 1773 in a small volume of above 120 pages, containing thirty-nine pieces, which she dedicated to the Countess of Huntington. This work has gone through several editions in England and America.

Most of her poetry has a religious or moral bearing; all breathes a soft and sentimental feeling; many pieces were written on the death of friends. In a poem addressed to a clergyman on the death of his wife, some beautiful lines occur :

“ O come away,” her longing spirit cries,  
“ And share with me the rapture of the skies.  
Our bliss divine to mortals is unknown,  
Immortal life and glory are our own.  
Here too may the dear pledges of our love  
Arrive, and taste with us the joys above ;  
Attune the harp to more than mortal lays,  
And join with us the tribute of their praise  
To Him who died stern justice to atone,  
And make eternal glory all our own.”

A poem on the Providence of God contains the following :