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Joseph Sill and His Diary

ONE Tuesday morning in mid-November, 1831, in a room above his gentlemen's furnishing store on Chestnut Street, between Fifth and Sixth, a Philadelphia merchant, Joseph Sill, began to write a diary. With extraordinary devotion he continued his daily entries for almost twenty-three years,[1] until October 30, 1854, the day before he suffered a stroke from which he died two

[1] The following significant breaks exist in the continuity of the Diary: no entries were made from Apr. 15 through Dec. 14, 1833 (Sill took a trip to England and France from Apr. 20 until Oct. 19, during which time he kept a separate journal which has not been located); only two entries were made in December, 1833, one in January, 1834, two in February, one in March, one in April, none in May, one in June, none in July, one in August, two in September; no entries were made from Sept. 15, 1834, until Feb. 8, 1835; fairly regular entries were made in February and March, 1835, only four in April, one every Sunday in May, on one Sunday in August, and twice in October; no entries were made from Oct. 27, 1835, to Jan. 9, 1836; seven entries were made in January, 1836, seven in February, five in March, then nothing until one entry on May 27, and again nothing until Oct. 16 (Sill was on a business trip in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois from the end of May until October), when there was the first of three entries for October, followed by nine entries in November, and six in December; beginning in January, 1837, a pattern was established of entries usually only on Sunday, with a few scattered entries on other days, until May 13, 1838 (Sill left for a trip to Europe on May 16 and returned on Sept. 24); the next entry was dated Jan. 5, 1840, with nothing again until Oct. 4, when daily entries were resumed, carrying on with only a slight break (Nov. 2 through 6, 1840) until Apr. 27, 1850, when a long break occurred (Sill left for Europe on Apr. 27 and returned Sept. 11, keeping a separate journal which has not been found); daily entries began again on Sept. 22, 1850, and continued until Oct. 30, 1854, the day before Sill suffered the stroke which was to prove fatal on Nov. 2.

days later.[2] His clear, precise script had filled nine books and part of a tenth, the first two of them ten by twelve inches in size, the other eight slightly smaller, approximately 500 pages in each, a total of 4,838 pages.

The Diary was preserved by several generations of Sill's family and in 1935 was given to The Historical Society of Pennsylvania by one of his great-grandsons, Edward W. Madeira. These ten volumes provide a unique revelation of life in pre-Civil War Philadelphia, for they do not speak either to or primarily about the upper class, which has provided most of what is known about the city's history. Joseph Sill began his life in humble circumstances and from 1831 to 1854 he formed a part of the dynamic upward surge from the "middle ground." The Diary might well be subtitled "A Philadelphia Gentleman in the Process of Becoming One."

Many historians have seen a unifying *Zeitgeist* in these decades and have given them such labels as the Age of Jackson, the Age of the Common Man, the Age of Freedom's Ferment. Sill was not a Jacksonian, he was certainly a most uncommon human being, and he would not have considered himself a reformer. Yet he responded fully to the challenge and opportunities of mid-nineteenth-century Philadelphia. He lived at the heart of the second largest city in the United States during a period of climactic change comparable only to the Agricultural Revolution of Neolithic times and the Atomic Revolution of the twentieth century. He is an authentic witness to a segment of the past about which we know too little.

Sill was born in Carlisle, Cumberland County, England, on May 14, 1801.[3] He had to leave school at the age of twelve to help sup-

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Several pages were torn out of the Diary, covering the following dates: Feb. 3, June 21–23, Oct. 13–16, 1843; Dec. 26 and 27, 1844; July 5–7, 1845; Jan. 14, Mar. 24–Apr. 15, 1846; Oct. 22–25, 1850. The Diary will hereinafter be referred to as SD. The volumes of the Diary are numbered in Arabic figures, which will hereinafter be transcribed into Roman.

2 The Board of Health incorrectly recorded Oct. 31 as the date of his death. Philadelphia Board of Health Records, Register of Deaths, Aug. 2, 1853—Apr. 28, 1855, Collections of the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, Vol. 9, at The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The report of the Coroner's Inquest in the Philadelphia *Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, Nov. 3, 1854, p. 2, correctly reported Nov. 2 as the date of death. This was the date recorded in the Register, Vol. I, [219] of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, hereinafter referred to as Register, I.

3 This account of Sill's early years is taken from SD, II, 260–261.

port his widowed mother and younger sister when his father died. "My youth was passed amidst privation and poverty," he wrote later, and he dreamed of the better life that might be his in the New World. Borrowing money to outfit himself and pay for his passage, and with a promise of employment in Philadelphia, Sill migrated to the United States when he was eighteen. Unfortunately, in 1819 the United States was suffering from one of its cyclical depressions and business in Philadelphia was at a low ebb. Sill was not given the position he had been promised and his meager resources were fast dwindling, when "about 3 or 4 weeks after my arrival, I procured a humble clerkship . . . at 300 Dollars per Annum, which was the first foundation of my success." He worked for Spackman and Little, merchants at 21 Church Alley, and lived with the Little family at 8 Church Alley for several months while getting established in his new surroundings.[4] He was soon able to remit to England the sum he had borrowed.

The young immigrant naturally gravitated to a tightly knit English colony, which included such distinguished members as John Vaughan, merchant and leading spirit of the American Philosophical Society, and Thomas Sully, already well known as a painter of portraits.[5] Also prominent in this circle was Joseph Todhunter, a dry goods merchant living at 54 South Second Street, who had come to Philadelphia from London the year before with his wife Mary, his

[4] SD, IV, 43. The Philadelphia *City Directory*, 1819, lists Samuel Spackman, merchant, 21 Church Alley, d.h. 308 Arch St above 10th; Thomas Little, merchant, 21—d.h. 8 Church Alley. The *City Directory* of 1820 adds the firm of Spackman and Little, 21 Church Alley. Philadelphia *City Directories* will hereinafter be referred to as *CD* with identifying year in parenthesis.

[5] John Vaughan (1756–1841) settled in Philadelphia in 1782. In 1819 he was listed in *CD* as a merchant, s.e. cor. Front and Walnut Streets, and in its institutional section he appeared as Librarian of the American Philosophical Society, Vice-President of the Athenaeum, Director of the Saving Fund Society, and member of the Committee on Correspondence of the Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture. The most comprehensive biographical study of Vaughan appears in Elizabeth M. Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism, 1796–1861* (Philadelphia, 1961), 20–293 *passim*. Thomas Sully (1783–1872) came to Philadelphia to live in 1808. After a visit to Europe, he returned to Philadelphia in March, 1810. "Sully's reputation had now become firmly settled. . . ." *Dictionary of American Biography* (*DAB*), XVII, 202–205; Edward Biddle and Mantle Fielding, *The Life and Works of Thomas Sully* (Philadelphia, 1921), 25. *CD* (1819) gave his address as Philosophical Hall, Fifth below Chestnut.

sons William and Thomas, and his daughters Elizabeth, Jane, and Esther.[6]

Vaughan, Sully, the Todhunters, and many other resident Englishmen were members of the First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia, which had been founded by a group of British immigrants in 1796, chief among them Vaughan himself.[7] The Church's leadership had been predominantly mercantile at the beginning and it continued to preserve this character. Sill fitted readily into the group by both nationality and occupation, and he began attending the Unitarian Church regularly in 1823, although he had been brought up in the Church of England and for a while attended Christ Church in Philadelphia.[8] One can assume that a strong motivation for his new religious affiliation was his attachment to Joseph Todhunter's daughter Jane, with whom she later said he had spent most of his leisure time in the five years before they were married.[9] Their wedding took place at the First Unitarian Church on October 20, 1825.[10] Two other

6 Many foreign visitors have described Philadelphia as the most English of American cities. Certainly contributing to this effect have been families like the Todhunters, both in the United States and England, who have cherished and maintained their trans-Atlantic ties through many generations. Visits back and forth, family portraits exchanged, and extensive correspondence surviving to the present day bear witness to the closeness of the English and American branches of the family. The English Todhunters preserved over three hundred letters exchanged between Joseph and Jane Sill, their children, and Jane's brother, John Todhunter, between 1825 and 1849, and three smaller collections, one written by Joseph Todhunter to his son Benjamin and daughter-in-law Anne (1829–1832), one written by William Todhunter to his brothers John and Benjamin, with a few letters received from John (1829–1848), and a third written by John Todhunter to his sister-in-law Anne and others (1842–1849). All of these, together with many other family memorabilia, were most graciously made available to me by Lt. Col. John F. Todhunter of Bures St. Mary, Suffolk, a great-great-grandson of Joseph Todhunter, Philadelphia's founding (Todhunter) father. Col. Todhunter also permitted me to study the Todhunter genealogical chart which he has drawn up on the basis of many years' exhaustive research. This chart provides, among many other data, the following information concerning the first Philadelphia Todhunters: Joseph (1767–1833), born in High Hollows, Cumberland, married Mary Wright (1768–1824) of Derbyshire, in 1794, and brought five of their children with them to Philadelphia: Elizabeth (1799– ?), Jane (1801–1877), William (1805–1848), Thomas (1808– ?), and Esther (1810– ?). As late as 1836 William Todhunter wrote to his brother Benjamin, "I am continually associating with English people." Letter dated April, 1836, in Col. Todhunter's manuscript collection, hereinafter referred to as WTod. MSS.

7 For a history of the Church see Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism.*

8 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Dec. 31, 1825, in Col. Todhunter's Sill correspondence collection, hereinafter referred to as STod. MSS.; SD, IV, 43.

9 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Dec. 31, 1825, STod. MSS.

10 Register, I, 96; Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Dec. 31, 1825, STod. MSS.

major decisions marked that year for Sill. He formally joined the Church and he applied, on October 4, for United States citizenship. He became a citizen on October 6, 1827.[11]

Sill at this time had "a good situation" with a merchant named Denman at 271 High Street, "who treated him like his own son," and with whom he continued to work, while Jane went on working in her father's store, until, in April, 1827, the young couple opened their own gentlemen's haberdashery business on the north side of Chestnut Street, old number 177, opposite the State House.[12] Jane wrote in a letter to her brother John in England that this was "one of the most fashionable parts of the city."[13] However, Sill noted much later that their new situation was in 1827 "unfrequented as a business place. . . . There was then not one dry goods store but ours in the whole street, all that kind of business being transacted in Second Street and Market Street. It was thought a reckless undertaking by some, but we thought differently. . . ."[14] The Sills proved to be right. They made a modest start: "The house we rented was unfinished. It had previously been occupied as a Printer's, and was covered with dirt, and had to undergo many repairs before it was tenantable. We had to make it into a store as well as a dwelling. . . . We had at first to go up a ladder to go to bed."[15]

The young couple worked very hard and a natural division of labor developed. Sill later wrote in his Diary:

> I open'd and Shut the Shop, made the fire and swept out, carried parcels out, bought goods, & tried to sell them by retail as well as I could; but it was a new business to me and I did not succeed very well. My Wife however was very sufficient in that department, and by her pleasing manners and untiring industry soon got plenty of trade.[16]

[11] *Ibid.*; citizenship papers in a family collection of Miss Elizabeth Madeira of Bryn Mawr, Pa., a great-great-granddaughter of Joseph Todhunter. I am deeply grateful to Miss Madeira for sharing with me her knowledge of family lore, family records and portraits, and for her permission to have photographic copies made of various portraits and photographs. Miss Madeira's collection will hereinafter be referred to as Mad. Coll.

[12] *CD* (1825) lists both Aaron and M. B. Denman as merchants at 271 High Street, as well as Aaron Denman & Co. at 271 High and 1 North 7th Street; Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Dec. 31, 1825, STod. MSS.

[13] Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Apr. 8, 1827, STod. MSS.

[14] SD, II, 261.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] SD, II, 261–262.

Within a year the store was employing many women, some of them probably on a "putting out" basis, making "gentlemen's articles"—shirts, shirtees, collars, stocks, cravats, linen gloves, etc., "a rather fancy line"—and was also supplying Joseph Todhunter's store.[17] At the end of the year they were able to report $1,000 net profit.[18] Sales continued to improve, but during the first two or three years Sill "found it very difficult to collect means sufficient to pay our debts promptly as they became due; and this frequently made me feel dejected and unhappy for a time. . . ." The trouble apparently was that their customers were among the city's "most wealthy young men," who bought on credit and took their obligations lightly. However, Jane was certain there was no need to worry, and indeed "this trial became less and less frequent, [and] shortly afterward I found myself free and easy in all my money arrangements."[19]

The Diary begins at this point. No sampling can do full justice to its substance, a 4,838-page manuscript report of what one man thought to be reality in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1854. Any abridgement of the text will inevitably lose its existential quality. However, lacking either the time or the desire to read the entire work, one can enjoy much of its flavor in different ways. The first few pages of the manuscript reveal much of the basic character of Sill's life—sober, thoughtful, deliberate in the effort to seize each day and make the most of it.

Philadelphia, November 15th 1831 It is a frequent reflection with us, that time and opportunity have often been neglected; that our memories are treacherous; and that we cannot refer, as distinctly as we would desire, to those thoughts and feelings, those actions and passions, which have once operated on us: that there have often been periods and occurrences which we could have wish'd to have become indelibly impress'd upon our hearts; but which, from inattention, and perhaps a too great dependance upon the perpetuity of our feelings with regard to them have soon become so indistinct as to leave but few traces of their identity or importance. . . . Impress'd with the conviction that it becomes us to fill up the time that Providence has allotted to us, in a manner that will be beneficial either to our mental or physical existence, I have herein marked out to myself the

17 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, May 22, 1828, STod. MSS.

18 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Mar. 1, 1829, *ibid.*

19 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, June 14, 1829, *ibid.*; SD, II, 262.

fulfillment of a design which I have long contemplated. . . . I will endeavour, so long as I am bless'd with health, to devote some portion of each day to the transcription of such ideas or thoughts as I may consider useful or important; to detail such of the occurrences of common or domestic life as may be refer'd to with pleasure; and to make this Book the testimonial, in some humble measure, of having devoted a portion of that Time which my Maker allows me in an act which I believe to be in consonance with his Will. . . . Under all circumstances I hope it will prove an incentive to intellectual advancement, and a guard against the worst of all evils, too much leisure.[20]

Wednesday November 16th 1831 This day has been a bright example of the salubrity and beauty of an American fall, being perfectly cloudless, with a sharp piercing air—the foliage has fallen into "the sere and yellow leaf"; but decays so gradually and with so great a variety of tint, as to make it rival the deliciousness of Spring. As it commonly happens during this month, the Wind has been flowing freshly from the N:W: . . . .

This evening I went to hear Mr Furness[21] lecture on the 26th Chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, in which the institution of the Lords Supper is described. It was a rational explanation of the true grounds of the ordinance, which consisted, as he said, in the simple and natural desire of the human heart to be held in constant and affectionate remembrance. . . .

It was remarked by Mr Furness, when speaking of the erroneous views which had obtain'd respecting the true purport of the Supper, that Gibbon the Historian was induc'd to give up the doctrine of Transubstantiation by the fact that three of his Senses prov'd directly the reverse, i:e: his Sight, his touch, and his taste.[22]

Thursday November 17th 1831 I have been lately engaged in reading Scott's & Bourienne's Life of Napoleon. The first is almost too diffusive, and abundantly tinctur'd with national prejudice—the latter almost too much given to dilate on the domestic relations of his master. They both have antipathies to him, which often breaks out in their respective narrative; yet they equally unfold the gigantic mind, and the wonderful resources of this great Man. . . .

This day has been a counterpart of the previous one—clear and cold. No further News from Europe. We are anxious to hear of the reception of the Reform Bill in the House of Lords, of the fate of the poor Poles who have retir'd upon Plock, and of the safety of the Monongahela.

I had occasion this evening to witness the overpowering effects of sudden passion, in prostrating the intellect, and levelling the individual to a grade

[20] SD, I, 1–2.

[21] The Rev. William Henry Furness (1802–1896), pastor of the First Unitarian Church, 1825–1875, and in emeritus status, 1875–1896. Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 109–110, 114 *et seq.*

[22] SD, I, 3–4.

but little in advance of the brute: this mastery of the passions over reason and judgment has been the cause of many of those monstrous crimes which have blacken'd all the Annals of the World; and ought to incite us to be careful in regulating our temperament, which left unrestrain'd might lead us into the most grievous excesses.[23]

Friday November 18th 1831 This day has been a gloomy one; and particularly so when view'd thro' the medium of low spirits, occasion'd by a severe head-ache. Not finding myself well I took some medicine which in a few hours reliev'd me.

In the evening I went to see young Burke in Counsellor O'Dedimus in the Comedy of Man & Wife; as it is an Irish character he succeeded to admiration; but I was more particularly pleas'd at hearing his performance on one String of his Violin, from which he drew forth sounds sweet as the choral Hymn of Angels, and varied his movements "from grave to gay, from lively to severe" with the celerity and correctness of a Professor. Against my general practice, I remain'd during the afterpiece, merely to hear him sing; the character was Patrick in the Poor Soldier, in which he trill'd forth "Savoorneen delish" most pathetically.[24]

Saturday November 19th 1831 There is at present much interest felt in the Question of Free Trade, and of a high Tariff: on the latter a Convention has recently been held in New York which has issued forth an address pregnant, as I think, with false premises and deduction [*analysis of address*]. . . . How it can be proven . . . that the consumer gets his articles at a lower price when he has full one-half to pay more than the Article is actually worth, is beyond my comprehension, and involves a manifest contradiction. . . .[25]

Sill's introspection, his sensitivity to his natural environment, his seaward orientation, his church affiliation, his reading program, his concern about foreign politics, his passion for moral improvement, his somewhat hypochondriacal preoccupation with his health, his love of the theatre, his mercantile common sense—all of these provide threads of continuity in the Diary. Certain important elements of the story, however, are missing from these first few pages. The most vital concern of Sill's life was his family and the Diary reveals with unexpected candor the daily routine and interpersonal relationships of his household. The record of his business activities provides many insights into Philadelphia's economic order. Sill's connection with the Society of the Sons of St. George consumed much of his

[23] SD, I, 4–5.
[24] SD, I, 5.
[25] SD, I, 6–7.

time and affords both amusing commentary upon the lighter side of this and similar fraternal organizations and a grim record of the charitable work done through the Society for the impoverished British artisans of Philadelphia.[26] Finally, perhaps Sill's major avocation, the practice and patronage of the fine arts, at a time when very few Philadelphians were thus concerned, earned him fame among his contemporaries, and the record of these experiences enriches the art history of the city.[27]

Sill described developments in his commercial and living arrangements in a retrospective entry on November 8, 1840:

> Our business from about [the early 1830's] became rapidly extended, and we began to look abroad for a larger Store. In the meanwhile our example of commencing business in Chestnut Street had been followed by many others, and in 1830, 31 & 32 many Houses had been alter'd into Stores in our neighbourhood. In October 1834 I made an arrangement with the Owner of a large premises a few doors west of us, who agreed to alter her private House into a Store suitable for our business, in consideration of our paying her a Rent of $1250 per ann. This was a great advance upon our previous Rent, which was $600 & 700; but we thought the increased convenience for our family, and the increased capacity for business would justify the addition of Rent; and consequently the necessary alterations were made, and we mov'd into our present premises, N° 185 Chestnut Street, on the 23d of January 1835.[28]

A year later they were among the first to introduce gas lighting into their store, making it one of the most attractive in the city.[29] In 1837 they realized a long held ambition when they were able to buy the house and store for $22,500, payable in two years, of which they paid one-quarter in cash at once, a remarkable feat in the depression of that year. By November, 1840, only $8,500 remained unpaid on

26 A benevolent organization founded in 1772 for "the Advice and Assistance of Englishmen in Distress," suspended in 1776 and re-established in 1787. Society of the Sons of St. George, *Historical Sketch of the Origin and Progress of the Society of the Sons of St. George* (Philadelphia, 1872).

27 Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society: The Formative Years, 1790–1860* (New York, 1966), ranks Sill high among the few Philadelphians whose encouragement of the arts helped to keep in the city the few artists who remained there during this period. See especially reference on page 321.

28 SD, II, 263.

29 Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, Mar. 30, 1836, STod. MSS.

the property and that was in a mortgage which the holder did not want paid at that time.[30]

The house at 185 Chestnut Street became a crowded one. The business occupied the ground floor, with the living quarters above the store. In February, 1835, shortly after moving into the new house, Sill had written: "My family is large, and needed more roomy accomodations; In the house we have left, five or six were sometimes obliged to sleep in the same apartment, and this in the Summer Season was unhealthy. This is the principal reason for the change."[31] Since the Sills had only four children at this time, the "family" must have been extended by other persons. Sill and his wife were ultimately blessed by "various mementoes of our mutual regard"—five sons: Joseph, Jr., John, William, Alfred, and Vaughan; and two daughters: Jane and Mary.[32] Regarded as practically a member of the family was Emma Alexander, who had lived and worked with Jane's family in Philadelphia from her early youth until the retirement and death of Joseph Todhunter, when she came to the Sills.[33] She became Jane's chief assistant in the store. Numerous "shop boys" and various female assistants came and went with the years, sometimes joining the family while their employment lasted. For many years Emma's mother "attended to the kitchen," and at least one house servant was with the family from 1832 on.[34] Other

30 SD, II, 263; Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, May 30, 1837, STod. MSS.

31 SD, I, 367.

32 SD, II, 261; the children's birth dates are taken from the Todhunter genealogical chart, supplemented by SD as indicated: Joseph, Jr., Oct. 27, 1826; John, Aug. 1, 1828; Jane, July 20, 1830; William Jackson, July 17, 1832 (SD, I, 166); Mary Rosa, Apr. 10, 1835 (SD, I, 407); Alfred, May 25, 1837 (SD, II, 79); Vaughan, Nov. 20, 1839.

33 Emma Alexander was born in 1811. SD, X, 226. Jane Sill, in a letter to John Todhunter on Dec. 31, 1825, STod. MSS, reported that Emma and their sister Esther "render themselves very useful" at home and in the store. Emma may have been one of the two "adopted daughters" Mr. Furness said Joseph Todhunter brought with him to the United States ("Recollections" written on an unnumbered page in SD, X, after Sill's death), but Col. Todhunter has no data supporting any legal adoption. Jane Sill in a letter to John Todhunter, May 24, 1830, STod. MSS., reported that their father was going out of business on July 23, 1830, and that Esther and Emma were coming to sew at Sill's store for $300 per year. In March, 1854, Sill took out a $3,000 insurance policy of which he made Emma the beneficiary, at the same time making the same arrangements for his sister Mary, in order that both women might have a "kind of independency" for the future, although he intended to take care of both of them as long as he lived. SD, X, 465–466.

34 John Todhunter to his sister-in-law Anne Todhunter, Apr. 23, 1845, in the Todhunter collection, hereinafter referred to as Tod. MSS.; SD, X, 2.

servants, including nursemaids, were added from time to time. Sill's unmarried sister Mary became a permanent addition to the household in 1842 after the death of her mother.[35]

Daily life followed a strict routine.[36] All rose early. Father took the children for a walk, usually in the State House Square and Washington Square, while the women prepared breakfast. Upon the return of the "pedestrians" morning prayers were conducted by Father, with all members of the family in attendance. Breakfast was served promptly at eight. The main meal of the day was served at 1:30 P.M. and a light supper was provided after the day's work was done. Saturday was different in one respect. On that morning Sill went to the market before breakfast and bought the sirloin or ribs of beef for Sunday's dinner and whatever else he felt necessary for that meal. "The old custom of Gentlemen carrying their own baskets to Market and carrying home provisions is still kept up, tho' not so generally as it was a few years ago," he observed in 1854. "I never liked this, and consequently never did so. The provisions I buy are always sent home by the Butcher . . . & I have no trouble about it."[37] The family attended Church twice on Sunday, both morning and evening. Tea on Sunday afternoons provided a happy time of visiting and relaxation.

Although Sill was unquestionably the master of the house, his wife was by no means a helpless female. She had worked in her father's store before her marriage and, as Sill readily admitted, knew more about the retail business in which they were engaged than he did.[38] All the men in her family fully appreciated her. Her brother William wrote in a letter to their brother John in 1833:

> As to Jane, she is little less than a miracle. . . . She in fact unites the singular qualifications of a good housewife, an admirable person in the management of business . . . a kind mother, a faithful wife, and an affectionate daughter. She leaves nothing undone and possesses a singular energy and at the same time gentleness of character. . . . Sill has a treasure.[39]

35 SD, IV, 23.

36 Some of these details were described by John Todhunter in his letter to his sister-in-law Anne Todhunter, Apr. 23, 1845, Tod. MSS.

37 SD, X, 211, 278, 470. In April, 1853, Sill paid 14¢ a pound for beef. Until that winter he had "scarcely ever paid over 12½¢." SD, X, 278.

38 SD, II, 261; Jane Sill to John Todhunter, July 22, 1837, STod. MSS; SD, IV, 173.

39 William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Dec. 13, 1833, WTod. MSS.

Sill knew it. Significantly, R. G. Dun & Company, predecessor of Dun & Bradstreet, knew it too, for in their credit rating of Sill's retail store in February, 1852, they commented: "'Sill's' wife was daughter of 'J. Todhunter', a smart woman, who would make a fortune for any man, who w[oul]d let her alone."[40] Sill willingly left to Jane's superior skill the daily operations of the retail store on Chestnut Street. She usually had the assistance of two regular women employees, a male clerk, and a "store boy." The store stayed open until ten o'clock six nights a week, until December, 1850, when Sill decided to close during the week at 8 P.M. to give his employees a little more leisure, although the closing hour continued to be 10 o'clock on Saturday nights.[41] Sill took charge of financial management, keeping the accounts, and purchasing. Twice a year, in May and October, he made purchasing trips to New York, and in 1836 he spent five weeks and traveled almost 5,000 miles on business in Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois.[42]

Sill constantly sought ways to brighten and enrich the family's life. Much entertainment took place within the family circle, with nightly games of chess and euchre great favorites. The Sills also gave and attended many large parties, and these became more numerous and more splendid as their wealth increased. As the children grew older they were permitted to entertain their friends at home in handsome fashion, though under Father's supervision, as on September 15, 1848:

> In the Evening our Son John had about a dozen of his Male Friends to spend 2 or 3 Hours with him; who met about ½ past 8, and adjourned about 12.P.M. They were entertained with Cards, Singing, Supper &c; and as they all seem[d] Gentlemanly & pleasant, I joined them occasionally with pleasure.[43]

Sill arranged for the family to attend every worthwhile public event and appropriate type of public entertainment. He encouraged the children's love of music and had them given voice and instrumental lessons. William played both the piano and violin even

40 Credit Ledgers of R. G. Dun & Co., Vol. 131, p. 235, Baker Library, Harvard Business School.

41 SD, IX, 258.

42 Jane Sill to John Todhunter, June 25, 1836, STod. MSS.

43 SD, VIII, 293.

before he began taking instruction and Mary had a particularly lovely voice. The young instrumentalists began to bring groups of their friends to the house in the evening for practice sessions, on which occasions Sill usually found pressing business elsewhere. Sometimes the music came from without, as in the surprising episode recorded on June 15, 1849: "We were woke up during the Night by some rich music under our Windows, and it prov'd to be a Serenade to our Daughter Jane, by Caspar Duhring & an Amateur Brass Band. Caspar I believe is the leader of the Music, which was exceedingly good & various, & embraced both Grave and Gay Airs."[44]

Physical fitness was of primary importance to Sill and he took the children not only on short daily walks before breakfast but on longer "pedestrian excursions" in the afternoons. Fanny Kemble having made horseback riding "all the fashion amongst Ladies," the Sill daughters were given lessons in that sport.[45] "Pic Nics" on the Wissahickon, rides in the ferry boat across the Delaware River to Camden, or swimming in the "swimming bath" on Smith's Island in the Delaware, were favorite ways to combat the "steamy heat" of Philadelphia's summers, when it sometimes became so humid that "the Wall Paper in the Rooms & Entries [became] blister'd and loose, and the beaded sweat . . . stood upon the Walls."[46] The fare to Smith's Island by a small, high pressure boat devoted to this purpose cost 6¼ cents, including admission to the "bath."[47]

For several weeks every summer, during July and August, the family went into the country to board, usually in the area of Darby Creek in Darby. In a letter to his brother-in-law, John Todhunter

[44] SD, IX, 18. Caspar Henry Duhring married Jane Sill on Oct. 13, 1852. SD, X, 149–151. He was the son of Henry and Caroline (Oberteuffer) Duhring, prominent members of the First Unitarian Church.

[45] Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, June 19, 1835, STod. MSS. Frances Anne Kemble (1809–1893), famous English actress, in 1834 married Pierce Butler, a Philadelphian, and lived in Philadelphia for many years. In 1846 she left her husband and was divorced in 1848. One of the complaints the ultra-conservative Butler charged against his wife was that she went horseback riding in the city unescorted. The Butlers were members of the First Unitarian Church and Sill knew them well in that connection. He greatly admired Mrs. Butler. *DAB*, X, 315–316; *Dictionary of National Biography* (*DNB*), XXII, Supplement, 929–930; *Pierce Butler vs. Frances Anne Butler, Libel for Divorce* . . . (n.p., n.d.); Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 94–287, *passim;* SD, IV, 353; V, 273, 338, 340, 399–400; VI, 211–212; VIII, 358; IX, 70, 89, 90, 328.

[46] SD, III, 95.

[47] SD, IV, 86.

in England, Sill referred to this exodus as "emigrating from the city," but William Todhunter assured the same correspondent that Sill was "a great wag. . . . Our emigration from the city consists in crossing a wooden bridge, riding 4 miles on a dusty road, squatting on a milk farm in company with 18 cows and expiating on the beauty and sublimity of nature in her wildest solitude."[48] Nonetheless, Sill thoroughly enjoyed the delights of "ruralizing"—hiking, boating, fishing, or simply admiring the beauty of the countryside, for he never lost the Englishman's love of rural living. The development of Cape May as a summer resort in the 1840's and 1850's drew the family many times down to the Capes by river steamer.[49] In July, 1854, Sill enjoyed the somewhat startling experience, together with about one hundred other men, of bathing in the ocean at Cape May "at 5 A M, without clothing, & felt it to be a positive refreshment & luxury."[50]

When the snows of winter came, Philadelphia took to sleighs, and Sill could often hear the bells jingling all through the night. A commentary upon the pace of Philadelphia's commercial life is provided by the Diary's entry of Thursday, January 22, 1846:

> As the sleighing was uncommonly fine we agreed to treat the Children to a Sleigh ride; so we started with a Sleigh & two Horses (driven by our usual Coachman Joseph Henry, the Col[d] Man) and drove quickly out to M[r] Pearsons at Darby. The Sleighing was excellent, and we arrived there 7½ miles, in about 50 minutes; but while we were all pleased with the exhilirating exercise, we were delighted with the appearance of the Country, as every Tree, Shrub, Blade of Grass, Bush, and fence was cover'd with thousands of Brilliant Icicles, which being reflected in the bright Sun fairly illuminated the face of Nature with sparkles like Diamonds. I never saw any winter Scene at all compared with it in splendour or beauty. . . .On our return we changed our route, and going through Darby, we drove on until we came to the West Chester Road, and thence into the City; where we arrived again at 6.o.clock, quite refresh'd, & enchanted with our drive.[51]

On another occasion, on January 20, 1852, Mrs. Sill, "the children & a party of about 30 went in 2 Sleighs to M[r] Middleton's

48 William Todhunter to John Todhunter, May 30, 1840, WTod. MSS.
49 SD, IV, 413–418; V, 353–354; IX, 398–400; X, 529–532.
50 SD, X, 532.
51 SD, VI, 461.

[in Darby] @ 5 P M, & did not reach home until 2 in the morning."[52] Particularly memorable was the excursion on February 22, 1854:

As the Young folks had made arrangements for a Sleighing Frolic to Mr Duhring's Country-house, we determined to go with them, ... we got under way in 3 large Sleighs, each drawn by 4 horses, & each containing about 20 persons, young & middle aged ... Mr & Mrs D. and Caspar had taken unusual pains to get everything ready for us, by levelling the Snow, and preparing viands for our reception; and about 8 P M we commenced to dance to very good Music, which we kept up for 4 or 5 hours. About 11 P M we had a very excellent Supper, & everyone seem^d exhilirated & disposed to add to the general enjoyment. I danced more than I have done for a long period, and really enjoy^d the Scene. At 1 in the morning we departed for home ... and ... we arriv^d at our own house about 3 A M, ready for our pillows.[53]

When the rivers froze solid, Sill deplored the slowing down of business, but he and the family happily joined the throngs of ice-skaters.[54]

Holidays were celebrated with traditional observances. In the 1830's Washington's Birthday called forth tremendous parades and civic gatherings, but a decade later Sill noted that these were "but a shadow of what they used to be."[55] The Fourth of July continued to provide "processions" and Sill arranged for family displays of fireworks in the evening. December 21, 1843, was the first Thanksgiving Day appointed by the Governor of Pennsylvania, but on this occasion and in the following years Sill noted only that the day was marked by the holding of special church services.[56] At the Unitarian Church Mr. Furness annually used this opportunity to remind his congregation how little the Negro slaves had to be thankful for.[57]

On Christmas Day there were family dinners and the exchange of presents. The shopping for gifts seems to have been done only a few days before the event. Restricted though it was in time, however, Sill's complaints about it have a modern ring.

52 SD, IX, 507.

53 SD, X, 444–445. The Duhring country house was purchased in early 1853. "Situated on a commanding eminence" opposite the Falls of the Schuylkill, the property cost about $25,000, including thirty acres as well as "an excellent mansion." SD, X, 265, 289.

54 SD, I, 36, 369–370; V, 156.

55 SD, III, 344.

56 SD, V, 111; VI, 403; VII, 232.

57 SD, V, 111–112, and subsequent Thanksgiving Days.

Thursday Decr 24:1840 My Wife & myself were out nearly all day making purchases for Christmas. It is a fatiguing pleasure! We have not only many Children to please, but many connexions also, and it requires no small tact & discrimination to choose something different for all. We have first to discover if we can what each would like to possess. Then we have to take care not to give any the same kind of present they have had before, and finally to select something out of a multiplicity that you see spread before you in the Shops. We were many times completely puzzled amongst the number & variety of toys we had to choose from, and after visiting Shop after Shop until we had heaped up a great many parcels, we returned quite tired with our perambulations.[58]

By 1852 he found that Christmas shopping had "become a fix^d & costly duty" and in 1853 he complained that "every Year seems to beget a richer & more expensive taste and of course more difficulty in the selections."[59]

Christmas Day, 1846, began traditionally but added something new.

At 2.o.clock we sat down to a sumptuous Dinner, at which we had the Sandersons & the Duhrings as our Guests, about 20 at Table. Plum Pudding was the crowning Dish!

About 4.o.clock . . . the Poor with their Children join'd us, and as my Wife had prepared a Parlour for them, all nicely decorated, with our Childrens Baby House as one of the attractions, with a long Table full of "Goodies", Bon-bons, Books, Toys &c &c : they soon began to enjoy the feast, and the pretty sights and were delighted with all they tasted and saw. About 30 Children enjoy'd these things, besides their Fathers, Mothers &c; and as they departed, after being here upwards of an hour, every Child was presented with a Box full of Toys & Sweetmeats, and a Silver Coin, as a Keepsake of this Holy Day! It seem^d a real treat to these almost destitute little Children![60]

[58] SD, II, 313. In 1845 the gifts numbered 160. SD, VI, 433.

[59] SD, X, 198, 404. In 1848, the Sills "concluded to make no presents, or to have our usual merry meetings, but to observe the day quietly, and if possible, with additional reverence for it!" SD, VIII, 384.

[60] SD, VII, 255–256. Jane Sill's sister Elizabeth was married to Joseph M. Sanderson, listed in *CD* (1846) at Franklin House, 105 Chestnut Street, where Joseph, Jr., a son by his first marriage, was manager. Joseph, Sr., had been keeper of the Merchants' Coffee House S. Second Street at the corner of Bank Alley, when he married Elizabeth Todhunter in 1829, but had since fallen upon evil days. *CD* (1829); Register, I, 98. Henry Duhring, however, was a very prosperous merchant in 1846, selling "coach lace &c." at 22 N. Fourth Street, living at 167 N. Sixth Street. A native of Mecklenburg, Germany, he had migrated to the United States in 1818. He had married Caroline Oberteuffer of St. Gall, Switzerland in 1829, the ceremony being performed by Mr. Furness, who had married the Sandersons earlier in the same year. *CD* (1846); biographical sketch of the Duhrings' son, Louis Adolphus (1845–1913), in *DAB*, V, 494; Register, I, 98.

A similar party was held on Christmas Day, 1847, but not so many came as had been expected. Several mothers came without their children, "& told us the Children were prevented from coming only by the thinness of their Shoes, which were not good enough to keep out the Snow."[61] This seems to have discouraged any further repetition of the event.

New Year's Eve meant for Sill chiefly the settling of his business accounts for the year. On December 31, 1840, however,

> According to an old Custom—I don't know whether it should be honour'd in the *breach* or the *observance*—we linger'd up . . . until the last moment of the Old Year had waned away, and the Sonorous Bell struck the decisive hour. . . . While the Bell was yet sounding, the still midnight air was in a moment fill'd with the din of Artillery. Cannon after Cannon boom'd over the waste of night. The Bells of the Churches rang a stirring peal. The report of the Rifle was heard from almost every point. Distant hurrah's came stealing on the ear, and the Song and the merry laugh were heard mingling with the louder sounds of rejoicing.[62]

On New Year's Day Sill customarily called on several friends to "wish them the compliments of the Season," setting out early in the morning and continuing until dinnertime at 1:30 P.M.[63] Sometime during the day or evening, alone with his Diary, he conducted an intensive examination of his own behavior during the past year, invariably found himself wanting, and recorded at great length both his past derelictions and his resolutions for improvement in the year ahead.

Anticipating that with their growing family and their increasing affluence the family might at some future time want to move into a dwelling apart from the store, in July, 1839, Sill bought a fine house on the southwest corner of Washington Square, old number 17, for $13,200, paying $4,200 in cash.[64] However, in spite of the obvious advantages of greater comfort and social *ton* to be gained thereby, Mrs. Sill seemed "scarcely able to bear the idea of leaving" Chestnut Street. Sill admitted that "The removal from this locality, associated as it is with the births of all of our Children, and with all our hap-

61 SD, VIII, 77.
62 SD, II, 322.
63 SD, V, 126.
64 SD, II, 264. *CD* (1858) changed the number to 710. After 1874 it was listed as 710 Locust Street.

piness & prosperity, is a . . . trying event; and I cannot feel surprize at her dejection and regret."[65] Mrs. Sill also felt it unwise to move so far away from the store so that she could no longer keep personal watch over it at all times. However, her objections were finally overcome and in November, 1850, the move was made.[66] It is an interesting commentary on the purported "law and order" of the past that on the evening of the first day of the Sills' moving, when only half of the household goods had been transferred and most of the family remained at 185 Chestnut Street, Sill and his son John slept in the Washington Square house, "and kept a Gas-light burning, to protect the furniture & house from any depradations."[67]

The move to Washington Square created an emotional upheaval, described in the Diary on December 2, 1850:

> The separation of our House & Store was felt for the first time to-day. They were no longer in connection, but in two distinct places, removed about 3 Squares from each other. . . . The opening of the Store therefore this morning was a novel thing: and the attendance of Emma & Thomas &c at their accustom[d] posts was felt by them to be somewhat unpleasant. Something of estrangement from the family seem[d] to depress their feelings, they felt that they were no longer at home, but home was removed from them; and the business was therefore no longer as agreeable to them as it had been for many years past. Feelings of this kind were apprehended by them, and by ourselves, before our removal was commenced; and they & all of us thought we were fully prepared for the event when it should come; but the reality of the change seem[d] to be more unpleasant than we had anticipated; and we all consequently felt depress[d] and out of sorts. . . . To Emma particularly the change appears depressing & sorrowful, and her feelings will be subdued only by patience and time.[68]

The house on Washington Square reflected the family's growing prosperity and also what Sill regarded as his own superior taste. He compared it with the latest home improvements of the Duhrings, their close friends:

65 SD, IX, 93, 220.

66 SD, IX, 253–254. Mrs. Sill lived here until her death in 1877. After John's death in 1855, his widow and children were listed at this address also, as well as Joseph Sill's sister Mary.

67 SD, IX, 254.

68 SD, IX, 257–258. Thomas Griffiths had come to the Sills in 1831 at the age of ten, presumably as a "shop boy," had advanced to the position of clerk, and in 1843 had been taken into the firm. SD, III, 247; IV, 358–359.

Sunday, December 1:1850 As our House is not in order yet, & we wish to give the Servants a little rest, I went to Mr Duhring's to dinner, accompanied by John, Jane, Willy, Mary & Alfred. Mr & Mrs D. made us very welcome, & prevail'd upon us to remain until after Tea. Their house has also been renovated, & refurbish'd, and presents in the parlours a gorgeous appearance, as rich as elegant furniture can make it. This is in accordance to their taste; but it is a great contrast to the appearance of our house which is quiet & neat in the ornaments of the rooms, and the Pictures alone are the attractions! Our Drawing Room however will outlast in interest, all the rich furniture & Draperies of theirs![69]

The new year inaugurated a new era in the Sills' social life.

Monday January 6:1851 This Evening we had a gathering of our Friends at our House to the number of about 40; a social company of the Young & the middle aged, tho' the young much predominated: and we entertained them with conversation, Music, Dancing &c until about midnight. We gather[d] in the Drawing Room up Stairs at first, but soon adjourned to the Parlours below, where there is more room for Dancing, and there we had much good humour, and merriment: and the time slipt away very pleasantly & quickly. We had but little style, but much heartiness, and this is what we aim'd at, & what we enjoy[d].

It was a kind of House Warming of the right Homely sort. . . .[70]

The Sills had the good fortune, unusual in their time, of raising all but one of their children to maturity. Their youngest child, the namesake of John Vaughan, died at the age of two years and two months, apparently of diphtheria. An excerpt from the long, minutely detailed record of Vaughan's illness and death attests to the morbidity of Sill's grief.

Sunday January 30:1842 We have removed the body to a cool Room in the Back Building, where it lies as placid as if sunk into a gentle slumber. We can hardly realize while looking at it that it is an inanimate body. A smile still plays upon its lips, and there is a wonderful life-like appearance about it, which makes it pleasant even to look upon. I have very often been with it during the day, and love to linger round the remains of so much innocence and beauty. While there was no one present this morning, I took a sketch of his features, which I will endeavour hereafter to make into a likeness of him.[71]

[69] SD, IX, 257. The Duhrings lived at 167 North Sixth Street in 1850. *CD* (1850).
[70] SD, IX, 283.
[71] SD, III, 303–304.

As he planted flowers on Vaughan's grave on one of the family's many trips to Laurel Hill Cemetery, he pictured "his little eyes beaming upwards through the mould with a look of fondness upon me. . . ."[72]

A continuing sorrow was the chronic and baffling illness of Joseph, Jr., who in early adolescence became subject to recurrent convulsions which none of the many doctors Sill consulted could cure. With the rest of the family the Sills considered themselves luckier than most parents. Nonetheless, the Diary records an extensive variety of physical ailments in the household, together with a full range of fantastic treatments applied. Sometimes the method was self-help, Sill's preference for most of his many pains and aches being copious internal doses of Epsom salts. Much against his better judgment, he permitted the use of animal magnetism for Joseph, Jr., until he was convinced of its uselessness, and he endorsed a course in hydropathy at Ephrata, Pennsylvania, for the chronic *tic doloreux* of his sister Mary.[73] These "irregular" techniques were at least relatively harmless in comparison with the prescriptions of reputable Philadelphia physicians. With the cupping, leeching, blistering, and purging the members of the family underwent at one time or another, only Divine Providence could be credited for their survival.

There is no record of how Mrs. Sill felt when, for what was feared to be "gout of the stomach," Drs. Wood and Wistar ordered fifty leeches applied to her abdomen.[74] However, her husband recorded most graphically his own reaction to the treatment Dr. Wood gave him for bronchitis in April, 1849. Dr. Wood ordered twelve ounces of blood taken from Sill's arm on the first day, but two days later prescribed more Draconian measures: "I had the Cups applied to my Breast . . . which were hard to bear—as it seem[d] to me that 4 or 5 oxen were drawing with all their might across my breast; but the operation was only about ¼ hours duration, & I bore it pretty well. . . . I think there were 8 Cups applied."[75]

The general level of sophistication of Philadelphia's medical practice in this period can perhaps be gauged by Sill's notations about his wife's illness in 1832. After Mrs. Sill had had about ten ounces

[72] SD, IV, 1.

[73] SD, IV, 438–439; V, 1–2, 4, 5, 12–13; VIII, 496; IX, 19, 41–42, 47.

[74] SD, IX, 520. Sill's physicians were probably George B. Wood (1797–1879) and Caspar Wister (1817–1888).

[75] SD, VIII, 464, 466.

of blood taken from her, she developed a violent pain in her side, "which the Doctor however [thought] rather a favorable symptom, as it has drawn the pain from her head."[76]

Sill must have been a peculiarly trying patient, as the episode on April 7, 1849, would indicate.

During the afternoon, when I was under the influence of Fever, I had a bright picture of the Destruction of Jerusalem presented to my mind, and the incidents connected with it seem[d] to flow so spontaneously & in such regular succession, that the impression continued to be very vivid in my mind, even after I was bled [of 12 ounces at 5 p.m.]: when it occurred to me that a plot of an opera, or a Drama, could be easily written down from the incidents that were presented to me. So I requested my Wife to procure Pen & Paper, and write down these incidents from my dictation. She accordingly did so, & wrote down the outlines of 2 Acts of a Drama; when she declared herself so tired that she could not proceed. I had the 3[d] & last Act also very clearly defined in my head, but I could not get it written down to night; but shall endeavour to keep the images & incidents clearly fix'd until the morning.[77]

Sill had fascinating experiences with dentistry. His dentist could not affix his patient's false teeth in his mouth so that they would remain in place more than two months, and when they came loose they collapsed totally and without warning. It did not make Sill feel any better to be assured that gentlemen always had more difficulty in retaining dentures than did ladies. The whole process by which the teeth were installed in the first place seems to reflect one more facet of the optimism of the period. Sill's dentist had the additional, rather esoteric, qualification of being "a Swedenborgian and . . . of course rather dreamy and metaphysical in his ideas." Office visits were always brightened by long discussions about religion and politics.[78]

As the Sill children began to grow up, the "generation gap," often regarded as a mid-twentieth-century invention, troubled the household occasionally, although apparently only in the case of the sons. No trouble seems to have been caused by the daughters. Freud could doubtless have thrown some light upon the relationship

[76] SD, I, 216–217.

[77] SD, VIII, 464.

[78] His dentist, "Mr. Harrington," was probably D. Harrington, dentist, listed at 120 Mulberry Street in *CD* (1842) and at 311½ Chestnut Street beginning in *CD* (1843) and for many years thereafter; SD, IV, 187; V, 233, 344; VI, 112, 216, 279, 476.

between Joseph and his male offspring, but without such insights Sill simply resigned himself to the fact that his sons never would achieve the perfection he required. Several long passages in the Diary, later crossed out but now partly legible through the fading of the ink, bear witness to the hard thoughts he often had about the boys, but also indicate his willingness to try to forget their misdeeds.

William seems to have been particularly obstreperous, although a notation in the Diary on September 6, 1852, when the young man was well past twenty years of age, suggests that Sill had a difficult standard of proper behavior:

> I had a serious talk with Willy this morning about absenting himself from home last night, as he did not conform to my rule of being at home by 11 P.M. I was much troubled, and I told him again that he must either reform, or he must find another abode. It is exceedingly difficult to produce any impression upon him, & I fear that he will never settle down, & become a steady industrious reasonable being.[79]

On the eve of Willy's twenty-first birthday Sill worried:

> During the morning I made enquiry about the purchase of a Gold Watch, Dressing Case &c. as present for our Willy on his attaining his majority on Sunday next. . . . I subsequently bought them for him. . . . His general character is restless & unsteady—not fixed to any determinate pursuit or study: for altho' he performs his duty as a clerk tolerably well, he has no ambition or desire to excel in it; or in music even, in which he has great talent. He will scarcely make a man of business, and it is difficult to say what he will make in future.[80]

Willy's future was decided at the battle of Gettysburg. His wounds received in that engagement proved fatal on July 18, 1863.[81]

Sill was greatly pleased when his second eldest son, John, entered the wholesale commission business and proved to be an excellent salesman.[82] He was the first of the children to marry and Sill functioned with great zest as father of the groom.

79 SD, IX, 129.

80 SD, X, 320.

81 Todhunter genealogical table.

82 John went to work at the age of sixteen in his Uncle William's firm of Cope & Todhunter. This firm was dissolved on Nov. 15, 1844, and William Todhunter entered into a partnership with Joseph Sill. John continued with the new firm. SD, V, 355, 433.

Tuesday October 28th 1851 I went to the Store early & attended to business all day until Dinner time. John was there for a short time, but he had many preparations to make for to night.

I did not go to the Store in the afternoon, but attended to several duties connected with the Marriage. . . . [We] rode up [to Mr. Dunlap's][83] a little before 7. . . . In a few minutes after we had all assembled in the Parlours, the . . . Groom's Men & Bride's Maids came in, and were followed by John & Sallie. . . . The Rev. Mr. Shields[84] then stept into the middle of the Room & commenced the Ceremony of the Marriage. It was simple, direct, well express'd and impressive, and not long enough to be tiresome. . . . It was according to the Presbyterian form, but hardly contained a word which we could find exception to. . . . The Bride was remarkable for her endurance, inasmuch as she received people for 3 hours without any dimunition of her happiness or gaiety. . . . At 11 o'clock the Company had generally departed; and we took our leave of John & Sallie . . . while they & their attendants departed for their new abode in Schuylkill 3d Street, above Race St. . . .

Their Marriage Certificate was signed by their Relatives, and many of their Friends, which was a new ceremony to us, tho' it is the practice of the Quakers particularly, and also of other denominations, and as the Dunlap family are of Quaker origin . . . they felt disposed to keep up their old Custom.

We reachd home a little before midnight. Mrs. S. kept up bravely, as well as our Children; but when the excitement was over I felt my head ache, and I was glad to retire to repose.[85]

The wedding of his daughter Jane and Caspar Duhring called forth even more excitement.

Wednesday October 13th [1852] This being the Marriage Day of our beloved daughter Jane I felt impressd by it, and soon after I arose I sat down & composed a special Prayer for this Morning's devotion before breakfast: which I read before the family, for our general benefit & serious reflection. After breakfast I went to business for an hour or two, and then returned home to look after many things preparatory to the Evenings Ceremonial.

The Company . . . began to arrive at 7 P M . . . and about ½ past 7, the Bride, Bridegroom & attendants . . . descended from the upper Rooms, & appeared in the Drawing Room. Mr Furness felt it to be a special occasion inasmuch as he had married both Mrs S & myself, & Mr & Mrs Duhring . . .

83 John married Sarah ("Sallie") Dunlap, daughter of Sallows Dunlap, merchant, 14 S. Front St., h. 53 Marshall. *CD* (1851). Their first son, Joseph, was, at Sill's suggestion, given the middle name of Sallows, "the Christian name of Sallie's father." SD, X, 177.

84 The Rev. Charles W. Shields was minister of the Second Presbyterian Church, North Seventh Street below Mulberry, in 1851. *CD* (1851).

85 SD, IX, 455–456.

and he dwelt upon this fact very happily, and also upon the fact that the young couple had been known to each other from infancy, & had had the benefit of good instruction & good example &c. . . .[86]

Soon after the Ceremony, our friends generally made their appearance & our Drawing Room became fill[d] with people. About 9 P M we all descended to the Parlours below, where dancing was commenced, and the Company were mingled up in a social agreeable way.

At ½ past 11, Supper was announced, & we all ascended again to the Drawing Room where an elegant entertainment was provided by M[r] Parkinson, to which the Guests did ample justice. Dancing was afterwards resumed below Stairs, and the Company generally did not depart until about 2 A M. We then took leave of our dear child, who departed with her Husband to their own Home, accompanied by the Brides Maids & Grooms-Men: and after all the excitement was over we were glad to retire to rest for a few hours.

Thursday October 14th 1852 We arose at 7 A M, & drove over to the House of the Bride, where we met M[r] & M[rs] Duhring, & the Brides Maids, Grooms Men &c, and eat breakfast together, after which we accompanied the wedded Pair to the River to witness their departure for New York & Canada. . . . The Brides Maids & Grooms Men joind them in the excursion as far as Tacony.[87]

John and Sallie presented Sill with his first grandchild when their son Joseph was born on November 21, 1852. Sill became predictably doting and more than a little arch.

All of us congratulated [John] warmly on his becoming a Father, and then they turn[d] to me with their good wishes on becoming a *Grand* Father; but I declined the appelation, as I considered it to savour too much of old age; and I requested to be designated solely hereafter as a distant relative of the miniature individual! . . . In a couple of hours afterwards I went up to John's, and had the pleasure of seeing "the Pink heap" who is a fine healthy boy weighing about 9 lbs. . . . . I saw Sallie also for a minute & told her that she was a model Mother, and had a model child.[88]

The joys of being a grandfather worked a slow change in the dignified bearing Sill thought proper for his age. On January 10, 1853, he thought it worthwhile to note in the Diary: "I made [the baby] laugh

86 The Duhrings' first recorded connection with the First Unitarian Church was on Dec. 16, 1827. Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 265. They were married by Mr. Furness on Oct. 22, 1829. Register, I, 98. Caspar, "infant," was baptized by Mr. Furness on Mar. 18, 1831, this entry immediately following that of Jane Sill's baptism in the Church Register, I, 12.

87 SD, X, 149–151.

88 SD, X, 177.

twice."[89] On February 20, observing his daughters' absorption in "Baby-dom," he admitted that he himself was "not backward" in this, "but love to shew my feeling occasionally by dandling and playing with the Boy also."[90]

Two other grandchildren were born before Sill's death, Jane and Caspar's first child, Ada, on September 3, 1853, and John and Sallie's second child, Harold, on April 15, 1854.[91] The younger daughter Mary's marriage to Edward W. Clark, another "merger" with a family communicant at the Unitarian Church, was still in the courting stage when Sill died.[92]

A serious breach in family harmony occurred on June 13, 1854:

> Caspar, Harry D, & John dined with us. The latter used very harsh & illiberal language relative to the right of the Col[d] People to vote, to ride in Omnibusses &c; and when his Mother & myself rebuked him for his illiberality & prejudice, he replied in a very offensive tone about our desire to associate & amalgamate with the Negroes, & said many unpleasant & satirical things. It was certainly very ill-timed & uncharitable in him, and we did not hide from him our mortification and displeasure. He soon left our table, and it is probable that he may avoid our house for some time, but we cannot help it. It is wonderful to us that our Children exhibit so little of that pity and sympathy with the Col[d] race, which is a part of *our* education, & our settled conviction of duty.[93]

Nothing further is said of this episode and apparently there was no permanent estrangement.

Several Sill cousins and numerous Todhunter relatives of all degrees, with their marital connections and many children, appear and reappear throughout the Diary, considerably enlivening the proceedings and adding much to what is already known about intimate social behavior in mid-nineteenth century Philadelphia. Among the most interesting members of the family was Jane's sister

[89] SD, X, 212.

[90] SD, X, 236.

[91] SD, X, 339, 474.

[92] Mary Sill was married to Edward W. Clark in 1855. Register, I, 113. *CD* (1854) lists Edward W. Clark as a broker, 25 S. 3rd St. He had been admitted to partnership in his father's firm, E. W. Clark and Company, in January, 1849. J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), III, 2101. For the Clark connection with the First Unitarian Church see Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 197, 247, 256.

[93] SD, X, 512.

Elizabeth, who in 1829 married the widowed Joseph M. Sanderson, then proprietor of the Merchants' Coffee House.[94] The saga of their subsequent familial and economic tribulations achieves Dickensian heights of commingled humor and pathos.

Undoubtedly the most endearing to the reader, however, is Jane's brother Thomas, the black sheep. Thomas had tried working for his father and his brother William, but this had not turned out well, and the family had sent him off on a whaling expedition in a "Temperance Ship" for a year and a half, in the hope of reforming his character. Unfortunately, Thomas did not like whaling, climbing the ship's rigging made him giddy in the head, and the captain drank even more than Thomas did.[95] The erring brother was finally deposited on a farm in the wilds of Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, from whence he made precipitous forays, ever and anon, upon the Sills, always without notice, always without funds, and always to the dismay and horror of his brother-in-law. One hilarious episode demonstrated the power of Thomas' family affection, however.

> *Sunday October 3d [1852]* On our return from Church we were surprised to find Thos Todhunter, who not being aware exactly when Jane was to be married, determined to come in time for the Ceremony—10 days before! but we hope only that he can . . . keep out of the way of temptation.[96]

Fortunately, six days later and four days before the wedding, Thomas experienced an uncontrollable desire to return home for a local election, "so he begd his Sister and Jane & Caspar to excuse him from attendance on the Ceremony, as he felt that a City life was too exciting for him."[97] Much to everyone's astonishment, in 1853 Thomas married a local country girl and settled down to domesticity, though "It [was] the prevailing opinion where they live that 'she has the worst of the bargain.' "[98]

94 The Sandersons were married by Mr. Furness on Feb. 24, 1829. Register, I, 98; Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Nov. 2, 1828, and Mar. 1, 1829, STod. MSS. The Merchants' Coffee House was listed in *CD* (1829) at S. 2nd cor. Bank Alley.

95 Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, Sept. 18, 1835, and May 30, 1837; Jane Sill to John Todhunter, Mar. 29, 1836, STod. MSS.

96 SD, X, 145.

97 SD, X, 148.

98 Thomas married Anna B. Mort of Huntingdon County, May 18, 1853. SD, X, 302, 561.

Sill had professed to agree with the sentiments expressed by his pastor in his sermon, "Give me neither Poverty or Riches," on February 19, 1832: "It was the middling class that had most reason for Gratitude; for they were removed from the temptations of either of those classes, and had the greatest inducement to the cultivation of Religion & Morality."[99] Nonetheless, his bitter resentment of the social snobbery in Philadelphia broke out in several entries in the Diary, especially one on November 18, 1840:

> I presume there is scarcely a Man living, who has not his secret cause of unquietness and sorrow. Those who have no real substantial cause make it their business to imagine something that grieves them, and become as really miserable as if they had no means of happiness left. It seems to be a part of our humanity.
>
> I am sorry to plead guilty to such a state of mind. With less real cause of unhappiness than the generality of my fellow Creatures, I have felt occasionally as if I could make myself miserable for a very little thing. For nearly two weeks I have found my thoughts reverting, from time to time, to what I considered a slight that had been passed upon me. I had not been invited to an Entertainment given by one of my oldest Friends, altho' many others were invited who I thought had less claims to the honour than I had; and to make the mortification deeper, I was asked by a Gentleman well known to both of us whether I would be there, to which I was compelled to give a negative answer. My feelings for the time were sorely wounded. I was full of trouble and humiliation, and altho' nearly two weeks have now elapsed, I still allow it to irritate and vex me. The only reason I can assign for it is, that I am engaged in a Retail business, that I am a Shopkeeper![100]

Sill extended his business operations in November, 1844, when he became a special partner of his brother-in-law William Todhunter in a foreign and domestic commission business at 34 North Front Street. He invested $10,000 in the firm for two years, with limited liability, receiving six per cent on his capital and one-quarter of the profits.[101] This association was changed to a co-partnership under the name of Todhunter and Sill, at 12 South Front Street, on March 16, 1846. The new firm prospered and Sill received between $1,200

[99] SD, I, 77.

[100] SD, II, 278–279.

[101] SD, V, 433; *CD* (1845); William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Nov. 15, 1844, WTod. MSS.

and $1,300 as his share of the profits in the first year.[102] After William's death in December, 1848, Sill continued the business with a new partner, George F. Arnold, who had been a salesman in the previous firm.[103] Sill and Arnold became Sill, Arnold and Company on January 1, 1851, when Joseph's son John became a partner.[104] In February, 1853, the firm moved to 52 Chestnut Street, between Second and Third, a highly favored location then for "all large houses" and one which Sill considered himself very fortunate to have obtained for a rent of only $3,500 per annum.[105] On October 31 of that year, however, he began a gradual withdrawal from the business. He became a special partner with a $50,000 investment, while his son John, George Arnold, and a new man, Samuel Leonard, became general partners, in the new firm of Sill, Arnold and Leonard, which came into being on December 1, 1853. Leonard, a transplanted Bostonian who had for the past five or six years operated his own commission business "with moderate success," brought $10,000 and many good accounts to the new firm.[106]

Meanwhile, changes were taking place in the retail store. In 1843 Sill admitted to the firm his clerk, Thomas Griffiths, in response to Griffiths' increasing "restlessness." The younger man had begun to work for Sill at the age of ten, and upon reaching his majority in 1842 understandably began to wonder what future his employment offered him.[107] In the spring of 1843 he had the opportunity of becoming a clerk in a stock broker's office, but Sill had "beg^d him to consider well the temptations that he might be thrown into [in such a position] and the perils attending too much spare-time."[108] Griffiths stayed with Sill when offered three per cent of the gross sales, a reflection, perhaps, upon his business sense, since Sill noted: "In fact he will probably not get much profit by the new arrange-

102 SD, VII, 18; *CD* (1847); William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Oct. 21, 1847, WTod. MSS.

103 SD, VIII, 377, 387, 388; *CD* (1849).

104 SD, IX, 265, 279; *CD* (1852).

105 SD, X, 142, 171, 179, 222–223; *CD* (1854).

106 SD, X, 349–350, 353–354, 358, 361–362, 367, 393–394; *CD* (1854). Upon his arrival in Philadelphia, Leonard had first become "principal Salesman &c. in the large firm of Gihon & Co." He "married a daughter of the late Charles Biddle (of the firm of Wayne & Biddle)." SD, X, 354.

107 SD, III, 347.

108 SD, IV, 358.

ment, as his Salary was equal to the 3 per Cent upon the present Sales; but I told him that our business might be extended, and that he would now have an opportunity of enlarging it by adopting such means as would be likely to do so."[109]

The name of Joseph Sill and Company, however, did not fully satisfy Griffiths' ambitions, and the firm became Sill and Griffiths in April, 1850.[110] Griffiths' dreams of eminence finally led him to leave Sill in 1852 and set up his own business. Sill thought this very foolish, "as he now makes nearly $1,500 per annum without risk or anxiety," but Griffiths had married in 1850, and Sill decided that "he has been indiscreetly urged by his Wife & her friends to undertake this step."[111]

In August, 1845, R. G. Dun & Company had described the retail establishment at 185 Chestnut Street as "the most fash[iona]ble store in Phila[delphia]," and had noted that its proprietor "Has made & is making money fast. W[orth] say 30 [to] $40,000."[112] By September, 1850, the same source reported that Sill's supposed worth was $100,000.[113] According to Charles Godfrey Leland, writing of the mid-nineteenth-century Philadelphia of his youth, $50,000 "constituted the millionaireism or money aristocracy of those days," for this sum entitled a man to keep a carriage.[114] Sill's investment of that sum in the wholesale business alone, in October, 1853, qualified him for that status. Earlier that year he had bought the carriage.[115]

Much of Sill's economic activity had a curiously slap-dash, haphazard quality. Perhaps it could not have been otherwise, given the generally amorphous and frequently chaotic character of the financial organization of his day. The Diary is filled with reports of bank failures, bankruptcies, defalcations, and other economic calamities. Sill noted on March 18, 1841:

I heard to day that one of our Townsmen, who has just returned from his duties as a Representative at Washington, was heard to say that there

109 SD, IV, 359.

110 SD, IX, 130–131, 192; X, 27–28.

111 SD, X, 27–28, 127, 134. Griffiths was listed in *CD* (1853) as "gent's furnishings, 268 Chestnut." This was near 10th Street.

112 Credit Ledgers of R. G. Dun & Co., Vol. 131, p. 83.

113 *Ibid.*, 235.

114 Charles Godfrey Leland, *Memoirs* (New York, 1893), 33-34.

115 SD, X, 241.

was scarcely a place in the whole of the U. S., that bore so bad a character among the People whom he met at Washington City as this City of Philadelphia at present. Her censure was in every body's mouth, and her monied institutions in particular were held in peculiar distrust. All her character for uprightness and integrity, which she had borne for so many Years, had fled before the flagrant exposures of dishonesty and fraud that had come to light within the last 2 or 3 Years; and that now he considered she was as much depressed in the Scale of Commercial Renown as before she had been elevated.

I do not wonder at this representation, for it seems to me that the character of our Citizens has changed altogether within these last 3 years, and that the worst kind of dishonesty has become quite common among us—I mean among that class of Men who have not only been placed in elevated & responsible situations, but who have assumed a Moral & Religious character as a cloak for their deceptions. Some of these persons defalcations have been flagrant beyond precedent: and the effect upon the character of our community disastrous . . . the name of a Philadelphia Merchant is no longer a guarantee for the performance of his promises. . . . He has become distrusted and neglected, if not altogether despised.[116]

Sill's mood, if not his manner, seems close to that of George Lippard, who, through the narrator of his sensational novel *The Quaker City*, described Philadelphia in 1844 as "The Whited Sepulchre, without all purity, within, all rottenness and dead men's bones."[117]

Actually, Sill's general attitude toward life bore no more resemblance to that of the unfortunate Lippard than did his happy and prosperous existence. Almost incredible is his light-hearted survey of his situation on his fortieth birthday, May 14, 1841, when most of Philadelphia had fallen into the financial abyss following the collapse of the Bank of the United States. Sill had owned stock in the Bank and had been seriously hurt by its failure, yet he wrote:

A little care—a little toil,
Is good for Man on every soil;
And I had what was good for me
In this, the country of the free:
But light the burthen, and the toil I bore,
For all the blessings of my worldly store.[118]

116 SD, II, 386–387.
117 George Lippard, *The Quaker City* (Philadelphia, 1876), 3.
118 SD, III, 48½.

In February, 1842, he hardly knew what money to accept in the store, for "the Banks themselves pay out Money from one Counter which they refuse to receive at another. . . ."[119] He no longer deposited any money in any bank, but personally paid it out or lent it to his friends. Many of his business acquaintances had thus become their own bankers, and there seemed to be "a growing distrust of all Banking Institutions."[120] It took iron nerves as well as a saving degree of economic ignorance to challenge and survive the economic perils of the day. Sill endured the depression of the 1840's buoyed up by the simple conviction that "an end must come to the present distrust and confusion; and the sooner we are brought down to the lowest part of the Wheel of Fortune the better."[121]

The sluggish pace of Philadelphia's commerce exasperated Sill. He constantly voiced his impatience and disgust with the "apathy and delay amongst our Commercial people, [which] only [confirm] our establish[d] character . . . every repeated instance hastens our decline in Commerce."[122] On one notable occasion in 1844 he had to wait eleven days after a ship had docked in Philadelphia to have his cargo discharged.[123] Complicating the problem was Philadelphia's geography. Every winter the rivers froze and paralyzed shipping. But even in good weather, he noted, "We, in Philadelphia, are becoming sadly tributary to New York & Boston in a Commercial point of view."[124] When his walks took him down to the wharves, he remarked how bare they were of shipping, "evidence that the Commerce of Philadelphia is sadly declining."[125] In March, 1843, he wrote: "Most of our Ships now go on to other ports for Cargo, as 'the Tho[s] P Cope' to Charleston, 'the Shenandoah' to Savannah, and 'the Susquehanna' to Mobile. A large portion of our imports is also done through New York, which is every day becoming greater and greater through its Commercial advantages."[126]

Some progress seemed to be indicated in November, 1849.

119 SD, III, 319.
120 SD, III, 334.
121 SD, III, 319.
122 SD, V, 19.
123 SD, V, 174–187 *passim*.
124 SD, III, 115.
125 SD, IV, 272.
126 *Ibid.*

I am glad to find that our Merchants are "stirring" in the attempt to establish a line of Steamers between this Port & Europe; as it is high time that we should be absolved from paying tribute to New York. We now import the greatest part of our European Goods through that port, which there is no necessity to do; and by Steamers we could import them direct. I hope this Line will soon be established![127]

He enthusiastically noted in the Diary on January 11, 1851, the opening of regular service between Liverpool and Philadelphia with the arrival of the "City of Glasgow."[128]

Sill strongly favored the development of railroads, even though he lived in the infancy of that industry, when an incident such as he recorded on June 18, 1844, could occur.

At ½ past 3.o.Clock we left Columbia [Pennsylvania] by the Rail Road Cars for Philadelphia, a distance of 82 miles. In less than an hour we arrived at Lancaster, where we join'd the other train from Harrisburg; and we proceeded along very rapidly and agreeably until we came to within 55 miles of the City, when the train pass[d] over a large Hog, which threw part of our Car and the Baggage Car off the track, & stopt our progress. We set to work however, passengers and all, to set the Cars on the track again, and succeeded in doing so in about ¾ of an hour.[129]

As late as 1852 he noted without comment that his partner, George Arnold, had spent all night in a railroad car on the way from New York to Philadelphia when the train was stopped by snow.[130]

Sill almost met complete disaster through an investment in iron properties at Pottsville, Pennsylvania, in the mid-1840's. He extricated himself just before the worst phase of the price collapse following the passage of the Tariff of 1846, but he lost $3,000.[131] Ever hopeful, he invested in coal lands, "the Hamilton tract," just outside Shamokin, Pennsylvania, which forced his brother-in-law William Todhunter to conclude, "I cannot place the confidence in his business talents that he thinks he is entitled to."[132] Yet R. G. Dun &

127 SD, IX, 89.
128 SD, IX, 285.
129 SD, V, 318.
130 SD, IX, 508.
131 SD, VII, 262; VIII, 89; IX, 132; William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Sept. 14, 1846, and Nov. 28, 1846, WTod. MSS.
132 William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Oct. 21, 1847, WTod. MSS.

Company in November, 1847 considered Sill "V[er]y g[oo]d, safe," and a month later his credit was "A–1."[133]

In spite of William Todhunter's disapproval, and perhaps much to his exasperation, Sill seems to have been Fortune's child. Certainly he did not lack courage and energy. His furious efforts, after William's death in 1848, to finance the wholesale business by a daily search for capital at rates that ran as high as 10½ per cent to 12 per cent leave the reader breathless, as they undoubtedly did Sill himself in a literal sense, since he did his seeking on foot. A bequest of £5,000 from his brother-in-law John Todhunter, who died in 1849, greatly increased his financial strength.[134] Between May 30, 1852, and May 30, 1853, the wholesale business doubled its sales and its accounts were "every day becoming more numerous and intricate."[135] Meanwhile, Sill continued to supervise the operations of the store at 185 Chestnut Street, going there every morning before breakfast and every evening for an hour or more until it closed. He belonged to the last generation of unspecialized merchants, able, willing, and many times called upon to perform any and all functions of both retail and wholesale trade.[136]

Sill's talents for business management were increasingly exercised in the affairs of the First Unitarian Church.[137] The relationship between the Sills and their pastor, the Rev. William H. Furness, had been especially close ever since he had married them in 1825. A year younger than the Sills, Furness was himself a "foreigner" in Philadelphia, having been imported from Boston in January, 1825, to become the first regularly ordained minister of the Philadelphia Church. In August of that year Annis Pulling Jenks had "emigrated" from New England to marry him. The two young couples became intimate friends, as Sill quickly devoted his enormous energy to the affairs of the congregation. He was elected a Trustee in April, 1831, and, holding that position until his death, he was undoubtedly the pastor's most hard-working assistant. Furness summed up what Sill

133 Credit Ledgers of R. G. Dun & Co., Vol. 131, p. 83.

134 SD, IX, 141; X, 417.

135 SD, X, 300, 307.

136 George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815-1860* (New York, 1951), 10–11.

137 Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 131–292 *passim*.

had meant to him in his funeral sermon on November 5, 1854: "He was our hand and heart."[138]

For membership in the Unitarian Church in nineteenth-century Philadelphia a price had to be paid in terms of public disfavor. As was natural, most of Sill's closest friends were fellow members of the Church, many of them, like himself, reputable merchants who during these decades achieved both wealth and social recognition. However, it is quite likely that Sill's elevation in the social class structure might have been both easier and quicker had he remained in the Episcopal faith of his fathers. He always retained a great affection for Christ Church, which he had attended regularly when he first came to Philadelphia, and he never lost his love of its "eloquent and soul-stirring prayers,"[139] but the fervor of his Unitarian convictions remained constant. He took his family regularly to Sunday services, morning and evening, and recorded in his Diary the substance of each discourse and his reaction to it. Usually he approved, but sometimes he did not, and he never hesitated to question the pastor's theology or the moral lessons he drew therefrom.

One notable disagreement arose over the question of Bible reading in the public schools.

Sunday March 17:1844 We went to Church & heard Mr Furness preach. . . . After he had laid the doctrine down that Christ had only given two Commandments, vizt "to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves"; and had shewn that neither the keeping of the Sabbath Day, nor the Communion, nor Baptism, were essential to Christianity, but only helps to its establishment & diffusion; he then said that he had reverted particularly to these things at this time in consequence of the difference that had lately arisen between the Catholics & Protestants relative to the use of the Bible in the Public Schools, that the Catholics had objected to the use of the Protestant Bible, and with reason, because it was not according to their views, a correct translation; and had appealed to the Directors to allow them the use of their own version (the Douay) in the instruction of their own Youth. The Directors had however refused to allow the introduction of the Douay Version, asserting that the Bible then in use (King James) was an accredited Version, and that it was unaccompanied by Note or Comment. Now in this, he thought was the Wrong, because the Catholics had equal rights with ourselves, and that by the Commandment of Christ we were bound to love our neighbour as ourselves.

138 William H. Furness, *A Tribute to the Memory of Joseph Sill* (n.p., n.d.), 4.
139 SD, IV, 43.

But he went further than this, and said that where it was found that the introduction of the Bible was the cause of ill-will & jealousy it would be better to exclude it altogether from our Schools & Colleges &c &c.

This was the principal drift of the Sermon, which was not at all satisfactory to my mind. Mr Furness & myself had had a conversation on the same subject several days ago (caus'd by some public meetings in Independence Square, calling upon the Directors to continue the use of the Bible in the Public Schools) when I was rather astonishd at the views he took, and took the liberty to dissent from them. He has however thrown his views together in this Sermon, and I shall not be astonishd if it causes some wonderment & dissatisfaction.... I think that the exclusion of this Book, when it is only to be used to impress the minds of the Youth in the grand principles of Love to God & Man, would virtually & practically amount to the condemnation of the Bible altogether as unfit to influence either Youth or Manhood. This I thought was bold ground to take, and I am sorry that he took it.[140]

Sill was no strict Sabbatarian, as he made clear in an entry on Sunday, November 27, 1831, when he stayed at home because he had a head cold and the weather was stormy.

It is a bigotted and narrow Religion which demands the absolute and entire prostration of the Soul to God on this day, to the interruption of the necessary duties, or of the refined intercourse of life; and as it receives no warrant from Scripture, it is as absurd as it is bigotted. The maker of the Universe can be worshipped as fervently & devoutly under the broad canopy of Heaven, as under the most majestic dome of human skill; and as the Soul has been bestowed for the purpose of exercising itself independently of others, no human dogma can compel its unanimity, or expect it [to] conform in all things to the opinions of even the majority.[141]

Sill never allowed the demands of church attendance to threaten his health, as he indicated on February 8, 1832:

The Weather has prevented us from going to the Lecture of Mr. Furness [the regular Wednesday evening service]; It is much to be regreted I think, that Ministers are expected to fulfill all their duties without regard to the unpleasantness of the Weather; there seems to be too much merit attach'd to it . . . many delicate females, it is believ'd, have become early sacrifices to their inordinate attentions to these services, and their friends have beheld them gradually drooping away, aware of the cause, but too delicately avoiding to persuade them against its propriety.[142]

140 SD, V, 206–207.
141 SD, I, 17.
142 SD, I, 70.

Many of Sill's entries in his Diary attest to his ecumenical spirit. He considered himself a connoisseur of preaching, and dissected the performances of several other Philadelphia clergymen in addition to Furness, as, for example, on January 15, 1832, when he attended St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church.

> Having heard much of the Rev^d Mr Tyng, his eloquence, and the effect of his preaching, I was induced to visit his Church this Evening. He appears to be about 35 years of age, of ordinary stature, pale complexion, expanded forehead, with a full, piercing voice. His articulation is good, but in some instances too much lengthen'd, and with too great emphasis. His gestures are not without dignity, but are too abundant, and altogether confined to his right arm. . . . As a Preacher he may be considered able to make great impression by his earnestness, and to convince illiterate minds by his extreme volubility.[143]

One of Sill's favorites was the Rev. Albert Barnes, minister of the First Presbyterian Church at Seventh and Locust Streets, only a short distance from Sill's house on Washington Square. "It is very seldom we go to another Church than our own," he wrote on Sunday, January 12, 1851, "but I like to hear Mr Barnes occasionally, as I am sure to hear no dogmatism, but much which is sound and convincing; altho' little of rhetoric, or eloquence in delivery."[144]

Sill's interest extended to Catholicism and one Sunday morning in August, 1832, when his own church was closed, he attended the new Catholic Church of St. John.

> The Bishop, Mr McKenrick, preach'd a Sermon which was intended to be explanatory of their rites & ceremonies, and to inculcate the reasonableness & efficacy of the practice of them; but I did not think his arguments very clear or satisfactory. The fact however of his deeming it necessary to enter into a detail'd argument to prove his positions, shews that the time has arrived when the Catholic even now demands a "reason for the faith

[143] SD, I, 52. The Rev. Stephen H. Tyng was rector of St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, on the east side of Third Street below Walnut, from 1829 to 1834. Described as "the prince of platform orators," when he was rector of St. Paul's he drew enormous crowds to the church, which was popularly known as "Tyng's Theatre." *DAB*, XIX, 101–102.

[144] SD, IX, 286. The Rev. Albert Barnes was minister of the First Presbyterian Church from 1830 to 1867. The best account of his life is Edward Bradford Davis', "Albert Barnes—1798–1870: An Exponent of New School Presbyterianism" (Th.D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1961).

that is within him"; and bids us look forward with some degree of certainty to the time when every Man will be allowed to read for his own edification, and without the trammels of party or sectarianism.[145]

Sill particularly admired the Quakers, who "have certainly the most fit and correct ideas of the true Worship. God does not need 'the uplifted eye, or bended knee'; and I think they have not only been 2 Centuries in advance of most of the other denominations of Christians on the subject of Christian Worship & Christian Duty, but they continue to be in advance of them up to this time."[146] Their gravity and quietness fascinated him. He concluded: "This is no doubt partly habitual, and partly the effect of their peculiar views, as I can hardly suppose they are as a class less content & cheerful than the various other Sectarians. . . ."[147]

The Philadelphia Unitarian Church divided bitterly over the antislavery movement in the 1840's and 1850's. The British immigrant founders of the Church had worked hard to be accepted by the community. Their liberal theology had made this a forlorn hope, until, by their sobriety, industry, frugality, and business acumen, they began to accumulate wealth. Since, according to the Protestant Ethic, no man prospered save by the Will of God, such accomplishment had to be interpreted as the outward sign of inward grace. The fact that the Unitarians were unexceptionably conservative in everything but theology had further eased their progress toward social acceptance. They were accordingly dismayed when their hitherto ingratiating pastor suddenly took up the abolitionist cause. Declaring that the flames which burned down Pennsylvania Hall had awakened him from "the sleep of the soul," Furness preached his first antislavery sermon in July, 1839, and from that point on until the end of the Civil War it seemed to the congregation that no Sunday passed without an attack upon slavery from the pulpit.[148]

145 SD, I, 187–188. The Roman Catholic Bishop of Philadelphia, 1830–1851, was Francis Patrick Kenrick. Hugh J. Nolan, *The Most Rev. Francis Patrick Kenrick, Third Bishop of Philadelphia, 1830–1851* (Washington, 1948).

146 SD, IX, 270. Sill could sit at the window of his drawing room and watch the Quakers entering and leaving their meetinghouse on Washington Square, "adjoining our house."

147 SD, IX, 270.

148 See Elizabeth M. Geffen, "William Henry Furness, Philadelphia Antislavery Preacher," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXII (July, 1958), 259–292.

To the accompaniment of violent congregational protests and the resignation of many wealthy members of his flock, Furness became the most outspoken of Philadelphia's few abolitionist clergymen. Sill was his most spirited defender. In September, 1842, Sill was described in *The Spirit of the Times* as "one of the most ardent of the disturbers of the peace of the South, and the whole country, in this matter [of abolitionism]."[149] The Diary records his version of the struggle.

Sill's most conspicuous public benevolence centered in the Society of the Sons of St. George, which had been founded in 1772 for "the Advice and Assistance of Englishmen in Distress." Sill became a life contributor in 1829, was elected a Steward in 1832, and served as Secretary from 1834 to 1841, Vice-President from 1842 to 1847, and President from 1848 until his death.[150] His most important work with the Society was the daily task of dispensing aid on behalf of the Society to the poverty-stricken British immigrants resident in Philadelphia and those who came in by the thousands during the 1840's. Many of those already living in the city were skilled hand-weavers who found it impossible to compete against the growing mechanization of textile manufacturing. Most of those entering Philadelphia in the early 1840's had had only their passage money and arrived completely destitute. Sill estimated that at least a third of them could find no employment, since these were years of deep economic depression. Many of these immigrants he helped to return to the British Isles by providing fare for their return passage. From those who stayed, the Society received "almost ceaseless applications" for assistance, and Sill worked diligently to meet these needs.[151]

Many supplicants came daily to the store on Chestnut Street; many he sought out in their homes. He described a typical visit on October 28, 1842.

> In the Afternoon Mrs S & I went down into the lowest part of the City to see some poor persons who had calld upon us for Charity. We found one Woman, with 2 children, & expecting soon to be confined, living in a cellar, part of which was unfloored, & exhibited much wretchedness; but it was tolerably clean. Her husband is a Weaver, & has his loom in the Cellar, but

149 *The Spirit of the Times*, Sept. 29, 1842, p. 2.

150 Society of the Sons of St. George, *Historical Sketch*, 7–9, 62, 76, 77, 78–79, 100.

151 SD, IV, 180.

has only occasional work, and is obliged to take goods for his labour. . . . Mrs S. left some Clothing, or Flannel, for the Woman. We then call[d] upon another Woman, Jane Dowell, who has long been a partial dependant upon us: her, we found very busy spooling, and at present tolerably well off. She spools for 2 Men who weave in the Cellar of the same house. . . . On our way across the Commons, we saw some Negro Children, sitting on a heap of Oyster Shells, and raking up an occasional Oyster which they greedily devour'd; in the raking of which there proceeded such an abominable stench as to compel us to quicken our Steps.[152]

Sill had only contempt for the role too often played by the Church in dealing with poverty.

Thursday March 6th:1851 Mrs S. has been much interested for several days in a poor Englishman (a Taylor) who is lying very ill with consumption, & who was in want of the common necessaries of life, his Wife being confined only about 4 Weeks ago, & 2 other children to support. . . . Thro' Mrs S. exertions & representations she has succeeded, after several days devotion, in getting them supplied with Fuel, Food, Bedding, Medicine, & a small Fund for their present support. In this she was aided by the Stewards of our Society; & by some of our Friends. This afternoon the Poor Man was visited by the Rev[d] Mr Allen, the Episcopal Missionary, who address[d] him in a sort of mechanical tone by telling him to depend on the Saviour! Look to the Saviour! & such hollow phrases, without leaving anything behind him for the comfort of the poor Sufferer! This set-phrase, mouth-piece Christianity is not the true Spirit. It is counterfeit![153]

As Vice-President and later President of the St. George's Society, Sill had ceremonial duties to perform, none of which gave him greater pleasure than greeting distinguished English visitors to Philadelphia. Prominent among those whom he described under these cirumstances were the novelists Dickens and Thackeray. He called on Dickens at the United States Hotel on March 8, 1842.

I introduced myself as the Vice President of the Society: and introduced Mr Almond & Mr Scholefield as the Treasurer & Secretary, and apologized for the absence of Mr E Dallett, the President. We then spoke of the objects of the Society, & hoped that he would honour us with his company at the next Anniversary, which, he said, he would not be able to do, as he then expected to be in the West or North West, but said that he would endeavour to think of us at that time. We then talk[d] about general matters

152 SD, IV, 133.
153 SD, IX, 311–312.

regarding England & this Country, in which talk he expressed himself very frankly and agreeably, and at times in a pleasant jocular way, and he produced an impression upon us that he was of a humourous turn of mind, and that he was at once sociable and gentlemanly in his manner. . . . The visit will dwell upon our recollection as long as we live. . . .

Our first desire of course was to see the lineaments of such a Man, & to observe his countenance: and the general impression of all, at the first glance that we had of him, was that he was younger-looking than we had expected. He does not look older than 30, is about 5 feet 8 In: high, of a good figure and square across the shoulders, of a pale complexion . . . great vivacity. In conversation his [?] dilates very widely & is very expressive; and in uttering any thing of a witty nature, his mouth curves upwards on the left side in a very comical way. His hair is parted on one side, and falls in full masses on each side of his face, which obliges him occasionally to shake it out of his eyes. In his dress he was very plain & neat. . . .

The opportunity was a rich one, and we all felt delighted that we had seen him, and talk[d] with him, even for a few minutes.[154]

Sill continued to think well of Dickens even after the publication of his *American Notes*, which he considered "altogether . . . a fair book . . . as liberal and honest as any Foreigner or Englishman can well be."[155]

He talked with Thackeray on January 21, 1853.

About 9 o.clock I call[d] to see Mr Thackeray at the "Girard House" whom I found at breakfast; but he courteously invited me to be seated, & to talk would not interrupt him in his morning meal. So I introduced as the first topic "the S[t] Georges Society" & handed him the Constitution of our Society, telling him at the same [time] that we should be pleased to have him at our Annual Dinner on the 23[d] April; and then gave him a little history of our Institution & its objects. He said in reply that he had been invited previously to dine with the Society in N York, but should he be in Philad[a] at the time he would gladly avail himself of our invitation. We then entered into the subject of "the Fine Arts" & M[r] Saunders the Artist, an old friend of his (about whom he told me some queer things); and then about his success as a Lecturer in America, which he acknowledged to be vastly better than his expectations; and in fact he said he found this Country the "El Dorado!" I gave him a cordial invitation to call at our House & look at my pictures, (I knew that he had been an Artist & was fond of the Arts) which would give him great pleasure, he said, but his

154 SD, III, 363–364. The United States Hotel was on Chestnut Street above Fourth. *CD* (1843).

155 SD, IV, 149.

time was so filled up with previous hospitable invitations that he could not fix any time.

The conversation was brief, but genial; and I found him an agreeable English Gentleman, of commanding presence (about 6 feet in height) and nothing of the ascetic or critic, apparently, about him.

I was much pleased to make his acquaintance, & hope to know more of him.[156]

Perhaps the most exciting business Sill became involved in through the Society was its commissioning of Thomas Sully, one of its members, to paint a portrait of Queen Victoria for the Society during a visit he was planning to make to England. Sill was asked to write a Memorial addressed to the Queen, introducing the artist and seeking her favorable response to their request that she grant him sittings. The Diary records Sill's almost unbelieving joy on October 7, 1837.

I have been engaged to day in rather a bold work, in no less a task than writing to her Majesty Victoria of England. Circumstances sometimes combine in an extraordinary manner to impel you to attempt a thing which you would at other times look upon as the most improbable in the world, which we are inclin'd to think we could never attempt. Two or three days ago I should have thought him almost mad who might have said to me "You will soon write a Letter to the Queen," but it is done, and done without the slightest hesitation. I had not the least idea of such a thing on the evening of the 5th inst.[157]

The mission might have failed at the start, but for Sill's methodical nature. When Sully presented the Memorial at the American legation in London for its transmittal to the Queen, he learned it was unacceptable, according to royal and diplomatic protocol, because it was sealed. Fortunately Sill had provided Sully with an unsealed copy for his own use, and this Sully had presented to the Queen, with favorable results.[158] The portrait was a great success, but

156 SD, X, 215. The Girard House was on the northeast corner of Ninth and Chestnut Streets. *CD* (1852). George Lethbridge Saunders (1807–1863), English miniature painter, exhibited at the Artists' Fund Society in Philadelphia in 1840 and 1841. Sill knew him well and referred to him frequently in his Diary from 1841 to 1843. *DNB*, XVII, 747; George C. Groce and David H. Wallace, *The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of Artists in America, 1564–1860* (New Haven, 1957), 559.

157 SD, II, 122.

158 The Queen gave Sully several sittings beginning in March, 1838. He finished two portraits of her in England, a head in May and a three-quarter-length portrait in June. The Society's portrait was actually painted from life studies in his studio on Fifth Street, Philadelphia, where he began the work on Sept. 30, 1838, and finished it on Jan. 14, 1839. Biddle and Fielding, *Life and Works of Thomas Sully*, 47, 51.

unhappily, Sully's exhibition of it before he delivered it to the Society and his painting of a copy without the Society's permission, led to a long and bitter quarrel between the artist and the Society.[159] Sill strongly disapproved of "the blindness and bigotry of some of [the Society's] members" in the matter.[160]

Another, only slightly less acrimonious, conflict with which Sill became involved was the prolonged debate over who should be toasted first at the Society's formal dinners, the Queen or the President of the United States. When some of the members suggested in 1846 that the President should take precedence over the Queen, Sill "objected strongly to such a disgraceful thing . . . and wrote a Letter to E. Dallett, Esqr, our President, saying that we had always drank the Sovereign first since 1796, and that we *ought not* to avoid it *now*, as it would seem like poltroonery, & not even be deemed honorable by the Americans themselves! . . . We have got very little loyalty left among us. I dont care whether I dine with the Society or not!"[161]

The "disloyal" suggestion did not carry at this time, but the question continued to disrupt subsequent meetings. A compromise was suggested in 1849, substituting "Our Native Land" and "Our Adopted Country" for the Queen and the President. This Sill branded "a subterfuge," since the toasting order remained the same.[162]

Politics provided another dimension to Sill's world. He followed all political developments with the keenest interest, in England and on the Continent as well as in the United States. He became highly excited about the struggle for the Reform Bill in England. "The spirit of independence seems to have gone forth; which the Aristocracy will find it hard to subdue," he wrote on December 5, 1831.[163]

159 The Society felt that its ownership precluded both Sully's exhibition of the work before its delivery and his painting a copy of it. He felt that he was acting completely within his rights. The Society obtained a preliminary injunction against him and he filed a countermotion. However, by agreement of counsel on both sides, the question was finally submitted for arbitration and settlement to three distinguished Philadelphia lawyers: Horace Binney, William Rawle, and Thomas I. Wharton. Binney and Rawle voted in favor of Sully's right to paint a copy of the portrait. The question of exhibition prior to delivery was never acted upon. Sully subsequently gave the copy to the St. Andrew's Society of Charleston, S. C. Biddle and Fielding, *Life and Works of Thomas Sully*, 63–64.

160 SD, III, 348.

161 SD, VII, 53.

162 SD, VIII, 415–417.

163 SD, I, 23.

When he recorded the news of the passage of the Bill in his entry on July 16, 1832, he expressed his joy in two exclamation points!![164] Like all American merchants of the mid-nineteenth century, Sill of necessity "looked seaward," for news which would effect prices and supplies as well as for the arrival of merchandise ordered from abroad.[165] The Diary meticulously records the movements of ships and incidentally makes clear the dependence of Philadelphia upon the ports of Boston and New York. Peculiarly frustrating to Sill was the several days' delay in the receipt of family mail from England which usually arrived by way of the other two ports.

In company with the majority of Philadelphia voters, Sill was anti-Jackson and pro-Bank. He generally voted for the Whigs, but was not to be taken for granted. At least once he voted for a Native American—Lelar for Sheriff in 1846—and at the first municipal election under the new Consolidation Act in June, 1854, he voted for a Democrat, Richard Vaux, for Mayor.[166] In 1848 he reacted with characteristic independence.

Friday November 3d 1848 I am much persecuted by the friends of Gen[l] Taylor for the Presidency, to give my vote for him; but I persist in my determination not to vote for a military Candidate, or a Slaveholder; and, altho' I am an ardent friend of the "Free Soil" Party, I shall not vote either for M[r] Van Buren, as I cannot overcome my doubts of his sincerity in the sentiments he has only lately espoused; and I dislike Lewis Cass too much to vote for him. So in this dilemma I shall not vote for any one!![167]

Sill found the Mexican War a very confusing conflict. The official reports constantly claimed American victories and yet, he noted on October 3, 1847,

Peace is as far off as ever! Defeated as they always are by the Americans, the Mexicans seem, as yet, to have no settled purpose of a treaty or to part with any of their territory. What the end will be, no one knows; but there is a widely spread conviction, I think, that it is a wicked & disgraceful War.[168]

Equally hard to understand was the President, whose Message Sill read in the morning paper on December 8, 1847: "he says,

164 SD, I, 166.
165 Taylor, *Transportation Revolution*, 10.
166 SD, VII, 197, 199; X, 506.
167 SD, VIII, 335.
168 SD, VIII, 4.

queerly enough, that while he has ordered his Generals to prosecute the War with vigilance, he has also requested them to shew the Olive Branch of Peace! He insists on Peace at the Cannon's Mouth!!"[169]

On the Fourth of July, 1848, Philadelphia celebrated the return of the troops from Mexico.

> At 1 o.Clock this morning we were aroused to see the effect of some fine Symbolical Gas Works, illustrative of *Peace* erected in Front of the State House, to celebrate the return of the Troops from Mexico, who are shortly expected. The figures were beautifully made out by small holes in the Gas-pipes, which formed themselves into various designs. The principal figure of Peace is nearly 20 feet in height. It is sealed & is well formed, & clearly defined by the brilliant light; and the whole spectacle was very beautiful, altho' the Wind made the lights flicker rather too much.... about 8.o.Clock, I found the Street opposite to our house beginning to fill with people, desirous to see the Illumination in front of the State House. Several of our friends were already gather'd together, on our balcony; and as soon as it was quite dark, the Workmen applied the lights, & in a few moments the whole of the design was in a blaze of light. People crowded together to see such a novel & splendid display, and by 9.o.Clock the crowd was so immense and dense as to be fearful to look upon. Several of both sexes were overcome by the rush & pressure & fainted, being borne in to the American Hotel; and this crowd continued until about 10, when the numbers began to thin. I never saw such a crowd, so closely pack'd together, in this City: and the heat from this vast body, as we leant over the railings of the balcony met your olfactories in a very disagreeable manner. Our visitors were obliged to retire by the Court in the rear of our house, fearful of the pressure of the Crowd.[170]

When the heroes actually came marching home, on July 24, Sill remained alone in the counting-house. "All the Young Men went to see the Parade, to look at a parcel of ragamuffins returning from an unjust, and aggressive War."[171]

Philadelphia suffered from a rising incidence of crime and general lawlessness during the 1840's and 1850's.[172] Arson and looting were the specialties of large numbers of rowdies who associated themselves with the volunteer fire companies, and Sunday seemed to be

169 SD, VIII, 59.
170 SD, VIII, 245–247.
171 SD, VIII, 262.
172 For examples see SD, IV, 79–80, 246, 322; also Elizabeth M. Geffen, "Violence in Philadelphia in the 1840's and 1850's," *Pennsylvania History*, XXXVI (1969), 381–410.

their favorite day for creating disturbances. Two of Sill's Sunday entries illustrate this.

Sunday November 12:1843 The City was disturbed this afternoon by most disgraceful riots of the Firemen, who fought at various places, & used deadly weapons by which many were injured. A Fire Company from Baltimore is now on here, which has helped, I believe, to prolong the riots. I trust that the Police may make 2 or 3 severe examples, and endeavour to check these now enormous evils. Our City has lost its reputation by them![173]

Sunday November 3d 1844 .... after Dinner, Mr B, Mr M, & myself took a walk into the lower part of the City. While in Southwark we were much shockd to see large numbers of lads & young Men flying against each other with Brick-bats & other Missiles, as the representatives of various Engine Companies who have a feud with each other. It seems they have been guilty of these practices for many successive Sabbaths, and yet no police Force, or magisterial influence is brought to bear upon the outrage. Southwark has been, and evidently now is under mob law, and property is hardly safe from one day to another.

I think the Lads of this City, from the age of 10 to 18, are as unmanageable and viscious [*sic*] in their habits, as in the worst Cities of Europe; and unfortunately they have too much influence, and are too much fear'd. They need the strong arm of opinion & the Law to restrain their unbridled lawlessness.[174]

The Diary gives full treatment to the anti-Catholic rioting of 1844, recreating the intense excitement of those days with particular vividness. The Sills experienced a complete change of heart during the riots.

Monday May 6:1844 It is really too bad, that the Irish Catholics come forward and provoke these hostilities; and it is high time that the Americans should protect themselves against a too indiscriminate extension of the Franchise to those who do not know how to appreciate it.[175]

173 SD, V, 72.

174 SD, V, 434.

175 SD, V, 264. The "Americans" were members of the Native American Party, which had begun organizing in various parts of the United States in the late 1830's, with the object of restricting the franchise to native-born Americans or those who had been naturalized after living in the United States for twenty-one years. It took the name "Native American Party" at its first national convention, held in Philadelphia on July 4, 1845. *Proceedings and Address of the Native American State Convention . . . February 22, 1847* (Philadelphia, 1847) includes the Declaration and Principles promulgated at the 1845 organizational meetings bound in at the end of the volume.

Tuesday May 7:1844 The Riot at Kensington occupies all minds, and the excitement continues. The Revd Mr Giles call^{d} in this morning while I was out; and when I returned, I found him in a warm controversy with my Wife about these commotions; in which he charged her with bigotry in accusing the Catholics with the commencement of these broils. She, on the contrary, affirmed that he was as bigotted in accusing the Presbyterians with all the rancour. Many words, & much earnestness occurred on both sides; and I was astonish^{d} to find the little Orator so warm, & so entirely attach^{d} to the Catholic side of the question! I argued the matter with him more cooly, and he soon regain'd his composure, tho' it was not without considerable effort on his part. . . .[176]

Wednesday May 8:1844 We return'd from this Scene of barbarity [*the burning of St. Augustine's Church*] about 10½ O'Clock & came home sick at heart, and weary from anxiety. But the feeling has already changed. People begin now to sympathize with the persecuted Irish, who were originally heated against them for their wanton attacks upon the Americans. The Smoke of this Church will arise to Heaven as a memento of the brutality of an American Mob, and the deed will be remember'd by the Irish for years to come, with a rancorous feeling; while it will be pointed at as a blot upon the Escutcheon of Philadelphia, of as foul a character as that of the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in 1838.[177]

Sill reacted with predictable anger to the violence frequently directed against Negroes. Election Day excitement often spilled over into such attacks, as on October 9, 1849: "we heard the State House Bell toll the Alarm for Riot; and we heard soon after that the Killers, as they are call^{d}, had made an attack upon the Colourd Population in 6th Street, at the corner of St Mary's Street, & burnt some of their Dwellings: A most unprovoked and barbarous attack; which will disgrace our City."[178]

Wednesday October 10:1849 The Riot continued nearly all night, during which some were killed, & many wounded. Our Son John was present during a good part of the night, & represents the Police Force as being great, but totally inefficient in consequence of their want of Arms; but everything of this kind is most culpably managed in Philadelphia.[179]

176 SD, V, 264–265. The Rev. Henry Giles, an Irish clergyman, preached several times at the First Unitarian Church and gave successful public lectures on Burns, Byron, Crabbe, Goldsmith, Falstaff, and the Irish leader O'Connell, from March through May, 1844. SD, V, 222–275 *passim.*

177 SD, V, 267.

178 SD, IX, 75.

179 *Ibid.*

The fault lay ultimately in politics, Sill wrote to his brother-in-law John Todhunter. "Our authorities have neither moral or physical power, because they are the slaves, not the masters of the popular voice. They are overruled by the people, who appointed them to keep the peace, and they are so much attached to office that they constantly fear to lose it. . . ." He felt that "truly Philadelphia must appear degraded in the eyes of every well directed community. . . ."[180]

From the second-floor balcony of his house on Chestnut Street Sill had a ring-side view of the frequent elections, for all Philadelphia voting was done at the State House until October, 1850, at which time it was decentralized among the various wards.[181] Large groups of friends often gathered on the Sill balcony to watch the performance across the street and their host enjoyed their company, but he had no affection for the noisy crowds milling on the street below. In general he felt what has come to be considered a typical Philadelphia gentleman's distaste for practical politics. The Diary on October 9, 1840, expressed his attitude.

Our vicinity for the last few days has been unpleasant. My house is in the midst of all the Election Excitement. It is surrounded by the places of meeting of both parties, and we have the advantage & disadvantage of hearing all the News, and having our ears stunn'd with the vociferations and din attending the meetings of both. While I am now writing, the sturdy voice of a Van-Buren Orator reaches my ear quite distinctly, altho' he is holding forth on the Steps of the State House on the other side of the Street. Altho' I am in the back-building of our domicile, I can hear him put the Questions of Order to the Meeting, and the noise of the accompanying *Aye* falls like the noise of an Avalanche upon me. They are holding a great Meeting, to have an influence, no doubt, upon the approaching Election.

I dislike these party meetings excessively. They display the very worst side of Human Nature. Men who in the private walks of life, are moderate and full of Truth, appear at these convocations full of the wildest passions, and can only see through one narrow medium. They are no longer even gentlemanly in their words or actions, but often coarse & vulgar in speech, and riotous and disorderly in behaviour. It is but very seldom that I attend them, but last night I step'd in for a few minutes to a Whig Meeting, a few doors below us, and was grieved to see & hear a Man, whom I had always thought upright and respectable, get up to address the Meeting. It was unworthy of him in every sense, and neither spoke well for his head or heart, a low tissue of commonplace, interlarded with vulgar & abusive language.[182]

[180] Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, May 29, 1844, STod. MSS.
[181] SD, IX, 221.
[182] SD, II, 228.

Family, business, church, public affairs, all claimed Sill's energies, yet during these same years he was also following what William Todhunter somewhat acidly described as "those elegant pursuits for which he is so admirably suited."[183] His Diary provides a detailed analytical catalogue for all these experiences. He worked hard to overcome the limitations imposed by a lack of formal education in his youth, attending innumerable lectures ranging from Emerson on political and social economy ("it did not escape dryness!")[184] and Poe on American poetry ("too long, and generally too dogmatical and censorious")[185] to Lyell on geology ("I came away . . . amazed and humbled at the thought of my own insignificance").[186] He began the study of French and Greek, by-passing Latin with great reluctance.[187] He read widely in contemporary literature, fiction, and nonfiction. "Altho' not much given to read the thousand and one Novels & Romances of the day, I feel somewhat anxious to get hold of any that come from the Pens of Scott or Cooper," he noted in 1831.[188] Always he felt handicapped by his lack of Latin. "My Misfortune . . . is apparent, when in the course of reading, I meet with an eloquent passage terminating in a Quotation that I suppose to be the very quintessence & spirit of the whole that has preceeded it, but which I am unable to appreciate. . . ."[189]

Sill not only read, he also practiced the literary arts. One of his purposes in writing the Diary had been to improve his prose style, and the writing of almost 5,000 pages constituted a sustained effort toward that end. He wrote articles for newspapers and magazines and had a novelette, "The Immigrant," published in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1842.[190] An indefatigable versifier, he commemorated in poetry all special occasions—birthdays, weddings, births, deaths, holidays, public events, departures on journeys and returns therefrom—as well as rapturous reactions to Nature. Recorded in the

183 William Todhunter to John Todhunter, Oct. 14, 1846, WTod. MSS.

184 SD, X, 416.

185 SD, V, 82–83.

186 SD, III, 309 *et seq.*, 332.

187 SD, I, 120–121; II, 118; IV, 138; Joseph Sill to John Todhunter, Nov. 4, 1837, STod. MSS.

188 SD, I, 130.

189 SD, I, 121.

190 *Godey's Lady's Book*, XXV (October and November, 1842), 180–188, 217–233.

Diary, these verses make up in emotion and good intentions what they may lack in genius.[191]

Sill loved the theatre and in the evening, at least once a week, usually, and many weeks more often, he attended theatrical performances. His taste was catholic, extending from equestrian acts to Shakespeare. He particularly enjoyed the Bard, however, and seldom stayed for the lighter after-pieces. Philadelphia audiences constantly irritated him, as he recorded on October 18, 1841, after seeing a revival of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" at the Chestnut Street Theatre.

> I went with full expectation to see this attempt to revive the fine Comedies of Shakspeare [*sic*], encouraged and supported by the people; but I was grievously disappointed. Shakspeare it seems has lost favour with the multitude, who now follow eagerly after harlequinism and Ballets, and can appreciate nothing of higher excellence. I became almost melancholy in looking around at the bare benches of the Theatre, and felt much sympathy with the Managers & Actors, who had thus labour'd in vain![192]

Audiences could also be rowdy and the Diary records instances of drunkenness on stage as well as in the audience, with accompanying violence.[193]

Among actors, Sill's favorites were Charles and Fanny Kemble, whom he first saw perform in New York in September, 1832.

> I may consider this visit [to New York] as an era in my life, for it procured me the rare opportunity of seeing Mr Charles Kemble and his daughter Fanny in the characters of Shakespeare; a pleasure which I had long sigh'd for, and for which I had even thought a Voyage to Europe not undeserving . . . the Play was "Venice Preserved" Mr Kemble playing the Character of Pierre. After the first impression which his figure and manner made upon me, I closely observed his manner of playing, which was new to me, inasmuch as there was more quietness about it than I had been accustom'd to see; the character is generally play'd with a fierce swaggering air . . . a

191 Seventy-two of Sill's poems were copied from an old manuscript into a notebook by an unidentified "E. M. Sill, 1903" and titled "Original Lyrics." Mad. Coll.

192 SD, III, 180–181.

193 For examples see SD, II, 350–351; VI, 271; VIII, 310. Sill also recorded his eye-witness account of the famous Astor Place Theatre riot in New York City, May 10, 1849. He was hit by flying debris inside the theatre while attending the play and later moved out into the riot scene on the streets. SD, VIII, 489–490.

bustling rudeness; but the Pierre of Mr Kemble was not such; his acting was always chaste and effective, partaking of "the modesty of Nature". . . . he walks the Stage like a Demi-God. . . .[194]

In October, 1832, the Kembles came to Philadelphia and Sill attended their performances four evenings within a week, an exciting pleasure cut short by a long illness suffered by Mrs. Sill. When the Kembles returned in December, however, he was able to see them play eight times in sixteen days.[195]

"I cannot feel that interest in the performances of Forrest that others feel," he wrote in 1832. "He is altogether too boisterous & artificial."[196] He very much enjoyed Forrest's arch rival, the English actor William C. Macready, especially in 1843, when the latter had developed a more subdued method of acting, "compared with what it was when he was here before. Then, there was occasionally too much expression of feeling and a tendency to rant. Now, all is kept down to the vraisemblance of Nature. Nothing is 'overdone' or 'come tardy off', but all is like reality."[197]

Sill's extended analyses of these and other actors, managers, plays, and productions add a new dimension to Philadelphia's theatre lore. It is difficult to imagine that any nonprofessional attended the theatre more faithfully than did Sill. Indeed, so often did he record dropping in at the Chestnut Street Theatre in the block west of his house, that the playhouse seemed almost an extension of his dwelling. No one has written more thoughtfully, not only of what he saw and heard but of the efforts that lay behind the scenes as well.

In his boyhood, when he was ten or eleven, Sill "had shewn some symptoms of a taste for drawing," and, though his parents were "in very humble circumstances," they had had him given "1 Quarters

194 SD, I, 200–201. Charles Kemble (1775–1854), outstanding English actor, began this tour with his daughter in September, 1832, ending it in June, 1834, when Fanny married Pierce Butler. *DNB*, X, 1253–1255. See reference to Fanny Kemble in footnote 45.

195 SD, I, 208–215 *passim*, 252–266 *passim* (Oct. 10, 12, 15, 17; Dec. 6, 8, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 1832).

196 SD, I, 211.

197 SD, V, 50–68 *passim*. He saw eight performances in two weeks in 1843 (Oct. 25, 28; Nov. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8), but missed the riot attending Macready's performance at the Arch Street Theatre on Nov. 20, 1848, when Forrest's partisans hissed and threw pennies and a rotten egg at their hero's English "rival." Sir Frederick Pollock (ed.), *Macready's Reminiscences, and Selections from His Diaries and Letters* (London, 1875), II, 307–311, 312.

instruction" in this art. Even then he was "wrapp'd up in the pleasures to be deriv'd from handling the Pencil, & sketching all that was around me."[198] In 1832 he wrote: "this talent . . . has afforded me in different periods of my life great delight & gratification, and still enables me to pass away many an otherwise weary hour; but has also had the effect of increasing my love for natural objects, and of refining my taste, from which I have many times deriv'd pecuniary benefit."[199] He recorded in the Diary innumerable hours spent in sketching and painting. Family portraits, Biblical scenes, landscapes, original compositions or copies of works he admired were his favorite subjects. He declared in 1854: "I scarcely ever feel more contented than when I have a brush in hand and [am] slap-dashing away!"[200] The Diary contains many of his sketches.

Sill made his greatest contribution to the arts, however, through his personal patronage and encouragement of professional artists who were attempting to make a living in Philadelphia. Even when his means were modest, he continually bought pictures and engravings, which he often could ill afford. In 1832 he had Sully paint his portrait and Jane's for $60 each.[201] He sought out the city's artists, visited them in their studios, entertained them in his home, recommended them for commissions, always bringing enthusiasm and a highly competent amateur's judgment to bear upon their work.[202]

198 SD, I, 120.

199 SD, I, 120–121.

200 SD, X, 439.

201 Biddle and Fielding, *Life and Works of Thomas Sully*, 273: "Item # 1590, Sill, Joseph (1801–1854) Begun July 30, 1832, finished August 11, 1832. Head 17″ x 20″; Item # 1591, Sill, Mrs. Joseph (1801–1877) Begun April 6, 1832, finished April 24, 1832. Head 17″ x 20″." These two portraits are now owned by Senator Joseph Sill Clark, great-grandson of Joseph Sill, who graciously permitted the author to have copies made of photographs of these portraits to illustrate her proposed account of the Sill story. For this and for Senator Clark's general interest and helpfulness in her study of the Sill family, the author is very grateful.

202 Among those about whom he was most concerned in the Diary were the following: (1) William James Hubard (1807–1862), English silhouettist, portrait painter, and sculptor, who came to the United States in 1824, and spent some time in Philadelphia between 1828 and 1832. Groce and Wallace, *Dictionary of American Artists*, 331–332. On Dec. 2, 1843, Sill noted that he was surprised and pleased by a visit from "our old friend, Wm. J. Hubard, whom we have not seen before for 11 or 12 years," who had come to Philadelphia to "resume his profession as an Artist." SD, V, 90. Sill worked very hard to help him and the Hubards became intimate friends of the Sills. However, discouraged by his lack of success, Hubard left Philadelphia on May 25, 1844, and returned to Virginia. SD, V, 90–286 *passim*. (2) James Reid Lambdin (1807–1889), portrait and miniature painter, born in Pittsburgh, Pa. In 1823

He found a strong ally in Edward L. Carey.[203] Their sponsorship of Emanuel Leutze was an outstanding instance of their alliance.

Monday Nov. 23d 1840 Mr E G Leutze, a young Artist of surpassing Merit has been encouraged to go to Europe by several of his friends, who promised him Commissions, & agreed to pay one half of the Amount in advance, to enable him to go. Amongst the rest of his friends I promised to contribute my mite: but when the hour of his departure approach'd and the Money was needed, he found two only who were ready to advance it to him—Mr E Carey and myself. He is of course much disappointed and has almost determined to stay at home. . . .[204]

Leutze did go abroad, however, in 1841, and in due course Sill received a picture from him, painted in Dusseldorf.

. . . the subject was the interview between Henry 4th and his Son, Prince Hal, after the removal of the Crown. . . . It is no little praise to say that the Picture came up to my expectations, and gave me sincere gratification on the 1st view; which was confirmed and strengthen'd the more I examined and look'd at it. It is a work of rare merit both in the exemplification of the subject, and the manner of handling it. . . .[205]

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he came to Philadelphia and studied for a year or two under Edward Miles and Thomas Sully, after which he returned to Pittsburgh. In 1837 he returned to Philadelphia, where he spent the rest of his life. For many years he was an officer of the Artists' Fund Society and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and an Honorary Member of the National Academy. Groce and Wallace, 382. Many references in SD include V, 168, 450, and VII, 8. (3) Emanuel Leutze (1816–1868), historical and portrait painter, born at Gmünd, Württemberg, was brought to the United States by his family shortly after his birth. After a short stay in Virginia, the family moved to Philadelphia. Here Leutze began his career and by 1840 had won the admiration and encouragement of influential Philadelphians. *DAB*, XI, 195–196. Among many references in SD see II, 283; IV, 301, 303; V, 55–56; IX, 422–423. (4) Peter Frederick Rothermel (1817–1895), born in Luzerne County, Pa., and described as "the last American painter in the art tradition of the Peales, Sully, and Inman." He came to Philadelphia in 1837, studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and under Bass Otis, teacher of Inman. In 1847 he became a director of the Pennsylvania Academy. He was also active in the Artists' Fund Society. *DAB*, XVI, 187. (5) George Lethbridge Saunders (1807–1863). See footnote 156.

203 Edward L. Carey (1805–1845), son of Mathew Carey, Philadelphia publisher. He left the family firm in 1829, entering into a partnership in the retail book trade with Abraham Hart. Arnold W. Green, *Henry Charles Carey, Nineteenth Century Sociologist* (Philadelphia, 1951) 4, 6; David Kaser, *Messrs. Carey & Lea, A Study in the History of the Booktrade* (Philadelphia, 1957), 35, 41–42, 47–48.

204 SD, II, 283.

205 SD, IV, 301.

The picture became a subject of intense interest in Sill's life, as his friends came to see and admire the work. On April 14, 1843, "Mr Lambdin & Mr Sartain call[d] in to see [it], and were delighted: they both united in saying that it . . . was a perfect Gem."[206] In October Sill wrote:

> Among the many Visitors I have to look at my Pictures, and to talk about Art generally, there is none who seems to relish his visits more than Judge Thomas Sergeant. . . . He has been an enthusiastic admirer of Leutze's Picture, which I possess; and in his admiration he gave vent to his feelings in a manner which he has not courted for a very long time. He actually composed [a poem] on the Picture, which I got a Copy of after very great persuasion.[207]

Sergeant's "On Mr Sill's Picture by Leutze" was written into the Diary.[208]

"The Arts languish here, I think, for want of some wholesome castigation," Sill wrote on April 28, 1841: "Good Criticism is always advantageous, and particularly if it is done with a kindly spirit, by some one who feels a real interest for Art, and who has no preferences for any particular individuals, or any other object than the advancement of a pure taste in the community."[209] This kind of criticism Sill felt qualified to supply and readily did so in person, although he hesitated to write publicly. Finally, he did write art criticism which was published in newspapers and a few magazines.[210]

Actually the artists suffered most from general public indifference, which Sill well knew.

> *Friday March 8:1844* Call[d] upon M[r] Sartain the Engraver, this morning, and went with him to M[r] Hubards Rooms for the purpose of introducing him. He was much pleased with Mr. Hubard, and with his Pictures; and each said that they would be glad to cultivate the acquaintance. Mr Hubard has now been here upwards of 4 months, and yet has not received a single Commission for a Picture. He is getting rather melancholy at his prospects, and I am truly sorry for him. His talents ought to command a most liberal encouragement. Other Artists however are in the

206 SD, IV, 303.
207 SD, V, 55–56.
208 SD, V, 56.
209 SD, III, 18–19.
210 SD, VII, 479; VIII, 12, 23, 50, 139.

same unfortunate situation; which indicates that Philadelphia is not the place for an Artists success. Indeed the taste for the Arts seems to be waning away in this City; and with our Commerce we shall lose our refinement also. Something must be done to resuscitate our taste![211]

Sill did his best. He was especially active in the Artists and Amateurs Association, and a month after that body adjourned *sine die* on February 22, 1843, he took a major role in the organization of the Art Union of Philadelphia.[212] He never faltered in his devotion to this project for "the encouragement of a taste for the Fine Arts, and the purchase of American pictures," through all the years when meetings were called which no quorum attended and when internal bickering stalemated all efforts.[213] In October, 1848, he complained: "How much of the labour & anxiety of the Art Union has fallen upon me! and how few of the Board's Managers take any trouble about it." [214] He continued to write articles on the arts, attended all lectures on the subject, regularly visited art galleries and studios, and continued to buy pictures. By 1849 he had almost forty hanging in his drawing-room.[215] His Diary provides a unique commentary upon the art world of Philadelphia in this period.

The first entry in the Diary stated that one of Sill's main purposes was to "guard against the worst of all evils, too much leisure."[216] All of his "elegant pursuits" undoubtedly he rationalized under the heading of "moral and intellectual improvement." Always he felt driven by time. "I must not delay!"[217] Only an extraordinary amount of energy and the highest degree of concentration and organization could have made it possible for him to achieve success in business and at the same time do all the other things he did in the wholehearted way in which he did them. Obviously, though he subscribed

211 SD, V, 197–198. John Sartain (1808–1897), English engraver, came to the United States in 1830 and settled in Philadelphia. John Sartain, *Reminiscences of a Very Old Man, 1808–1897* (New York, 1899); *DAB*, XVI, 371–372. His active connection with the First Unitarian Church began in 1830. Geffen, *Philadelphia Unitarianism*, 154–292 *passim*. See reference to Hubard in footnote 202.

212 SD, IV-IX *passim*.

213 SD, V, 198.

214 SD, VIII, 316.

215 SD, VIII, 473.

216 SD, I, 2.

217 SD, VIII, 2.

to the Protestant Ethic and prized hard work and frugality, his major interest was never wholly, or perhaps not even primarily, engaged in the business world. Business was for him only the means to achieve the wealth necessary for the life of cultivated leisure he most earnestly desired.

In May, 1854, Sill finally gave up his desk at 52 Chestnut Street and began to make plans for a future in which he could devote himself more completely to the cultivation of the fine arts and the many civic enterprises which had always claimed his interest.[218] His hopes were cut short by his death five months later. In addition to real estate holdings, including the coal lands at Shamokin and the properties at 185 Chestnut Street and 17 Washington Square, he left personal assets valued at over $60,000.[219] His worldly success was attested in 1859 when Henry L. Simpson included him in his *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased.*[220]

What kind of man was Joseph Sill? Can one take at face value the funeral sermon of his pastor, when "already the sacred mystery of Death [had] invested the idea of him and made his memory sacred"?[221] Simpson's account of him in the *Lives of Eminent Philadelphians* exhibits all the eulogistic fervor of an obituary notice, in which Sill died mourned "by the whole city, of which he was so great an ornament."[222] Even while Sill enjoyed his full health and strength, however, in 1836, his brother-in-law William Todhunter, not always his greatest admirer and often an acrimonious critic, described him as "a man of intelligence and a gentleman . . . a good husband, a kind father and an honest man, respected and beloved by all that know him."[223]

Ultimately, Sill is important to the reader because he was a highly perceptive and articulate human being, who recorded in his Diary what it was like to be alive in Philadelphia from 1831 to 1854. The Diary is one man's vision of reality. This is the essence of history. Sill's sensitivity, sometimes morbidly acute, kept him in unremitting

218 SD, X, 417.

219 Inventory in Mad. Coll.

220 Henry L. Simpson, *The Lives of Eminent Philadelphians Now Deceased* (Philadelphia, 1859), 888–890.

221 Furness, *Tribute*, 9.

222 Simpson, *Lives of Eminent Philadelphians*, 890.

223 William Todhunter to John Todhunter, April, 1836, WTod. MSS.

contact with the tensions of his day, but he also captured in his Diary the timeless duality of human existence. Conventional piety tried to focus his attention heavenward, but in vain. His senses committed him irresistibly to "the delights of living in this beautiful world."[224] His zest survives on every page of the Diary.[225]

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224 SD, X, 230.

225 The author's use of the Sill Diary was made possible by the generosity of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The study of the Diary was greatly facilitated by a grant from the Penrose Fund of the American Philosophical Society.