

Sara Jane Daniels Ames Her Short, Hard, Devoted Life

By Mary Lesley Wolff

Sara Jane Daniels Ames, my great-grandmother, was the first wife of Charles Gordon Ames. She was born in 1828 into disjointed family, some of whose children were, after their father's death, farmed out to relatives because of the family's abject poverty. Daughter of an invalid mother, Joann Whitehouse Daniels, and herself in ill health most of the time after the age of 25, she was only 33 when she died.

She was a devout Christian whose main concern was her duty as a missionary, as partner to her minister husband, and as caregiver to her invalid mother. She studied theology and devoured many philosophical books, especially Emerson. Her faith sustained her. She gave her work all her energy and strength, and more. Despite its hardships, she found the work satisfying, sometimes even joyous.

Because of this intense sense of duty, she was, for most of the last years of life, torn between concern for her invalid mother in New Hampshire and her obligation to work alongside her husband in Minnesota, half a continent away. And all this time, she had to battle with financial hardship and poor health, a battle she lost before her youth was hardly over.

Shortly after her death, a minister friend wrote a long article for the local newspaper, the Bloomington Pantagraph, quoted here only in part:

"AMES -- Died in Bloomington, September 16th, Mrs. Sarah Jane Ames, wife of Rev. C. G. Ames, aged 33 years.

"She was born in Barnstead, N.H. September 15, 1828. Heaven endowed her with a mind of unusual activity and scope. The love of knowledge early manifested itself in her mental constitution, and grew more intense as the years passed on. And she loved knowledge not as a mere ornament of character, but for its own sake and for the auxiliary it was to her in the great mission of life.

"Soon after their marriage, Br. Ames and his wife entered the field of home missionary labor. Connected with an enthusiastic denomination of Christians, they both kindled with that enthusiasm and meant to work under its inspiration. They both toiled and sacrificed comforts to build up and fortify what then seemed to them the cause of truth and righteousness.

"It was during this period that Mrs. Ames' constitutional health was undermined.... Though much of the time her countenance exhibited the bloom of apparent health, and her eye was brilliant, still beneath it all lay the derangement which has finally gained the victory, and brought her friends to tears.... The result so sudden and so unexpected to her friends evinces how fatally disease had seized upon her.... As one of her neighbors said, 'She seemed to be like a person walking on a rope over some deep gulf, with every nerve tasked to its utmost to prevent a plunge into the depth below....'

"In all her acts she obeyed the voice of conscience. To her it was the voice of the Eternal Father--where it called, she was ready to go.... Every change of opinion, every modification of sentiment, every step which she took up the golden gradation of truth, every deed she performed, all was guided and inspired by conscience....

"To her religion was less a form than a spirit, a life.... So much did she enter into the spirit, so eagerly did she feed on the reality, that what was only exterior had no sweetness to her soul....

"The sufferings which she has endured have been to her like a refining fire, and have helped to educate her in this angelic state of soul. When she dwelt on immortality as fact, it was to her full of radiance and joy--a home for the soul when its material and sinful fetters have fallen off...."

Finding Sara Jane's History

Sara Jane Daniels married Charles Gordon Ames in Dover, New Hampshire on March 28, 1850. Together they had one child, Charles Wilberforce Ames, my grandfather, who was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota Territory, June 30, 1855. In 1856, they adopted Serena Marie Huntley, a young girl who had been living with them for several years. Upon adoption, she took the name of Ames. Five years later Serena married George Wright of Minneapolis.

My father, Charles Lesley Ames, who had a great interest in our family genealogy, asked his Aunt Edith about Sara Jane. "I know practically nothing about Sarah Jane Daniels," she replied. "From casual words I gathered that she was a very lovely person and one of 'parts' and that your father resembled her, physically and temperamentally--not mentally, particularly as she was slower."

As I grew up, a drawing of Sara Jane hung in an oval gold frame in our living room, paired with a photo of her husband. My father often told me that her life was clouded in mystery. Consequently, it has been a great delight to find, in the thousands of papers in the Ames Family Historical Collection, a good deal of correspondence among Sara Jane's family members, including not only herself and Charles Gordon, but also Serena Ames Wright, their adopted daughter, and Joann Whitehouse Daniels, Sarah Jane's mother. In addition, there are letters from Sarah Jane's siblings and from her aunts and uncles on both the Daniels and Whitehouse sides. By coupling these

with some snooping in old New Hampshire public records, and in the Wright papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, I have been able to piece together the following account of Sarah Jane's background and life.

In addition to what follows in the main text, more information on the early generations of the Daniel Family appears in an addendum to this biographical sketch.

The Daniels Family

Sara Jane's father was John Daniels. He was born in November 1795, probably in Barnstead, since that was his parents' home. Sara Jane was the child of his second wife, Joann. Previously he had been married to Joann's sister, Mary, with whom he had three children. When he died at Barnstead in October 1830 of typhus fever, he left his wife Joann to care for Maria, 9 1/2, John Whitehouse, 7 1/2, Mary Ann 4 1/2, and Sara Jane, 2.

According to Charles Gordon Ames, John Daniels was a storekeeper. Court records indicate that he had a license to sell spirituous liquors. He served in the militia for a little while in 1812 in defense of Portsmouth, for which service Joann was later awarded a warrant for some land in Minnesota.

The Daniels family, once prosperous, had fallen on bad times in John's generation and that of his father. His estate was meager. The notes he held that were worthless far outweighed those that had any value. Bad ones included a note from his father Peletiah Daniels and others from Charles Bickford and John Bickford, presumably relatives, since John's mother's maiden name was Bickford.

The total value of the estate was reported at \$162.72. There was no real estate. In the end it appears the widow was given an allowance of \$75 and later \$75 of proceeds from the sale of household property and livestock. With this she was to support four young children.

Daniels Family History

The first family member we know about came to New Hampshire about the time of the French and Indian War, 1755-57. His name was Peletiah, and he settled in South Barrington. He was a successful land owner (and presumably a farmer), signed a pledge to support the Revolution required by the colony's Committee of Safety, and participated in the Revolutionary War sufficiently to have his name on a memorial in the Barrington cemetery.

We know little about Peletiah's son, John's father, also named Peletiah. One of his children, Abigail, John's sister, married the Rev. David Garland. If he is the man of the same name buried in Barnstead, he was pastor of the Second Free-Will Baptist Church there; and if so, it is possible that Sara Jane was a Free-Will Baptist from childhood. (She and Charles met at a prayer meeting, he later wrote).

The Whitehouse Family

Thus far, the origin of Whitehouse family remains a mystery to us. Among correspondence saved by Joann Whitehouse Daniels are many letters from her siblings. From these I have been able to tease out the following facts. Joann had six siblings, Mary, Charles, Sarah, Lewis, William and John. The order of birth remains a mystery. Lewis married Sarah Bickford, kept a shop in North Wolfeboro NH, and for many years provided a home for his invalid sister Joann (Sara Jane's mother).

Sara Jane's Early Years

After John's death, Joann and the children, or at least some of them, lived for many years with John's sister Lois and her husband Samuel Garland, a farmer, in North Barnstead. We do not know whether or not Sara Jane was one of those children, or whether she stayed with her mother.

Joann's sister Sarah and Sarah's husband, John Clark, ran the Eagle Hotel in Dover, NH. Joann ran the kitchen to earn her keep and care for her children. "In taking charge of culinary department," Charles Gordon Ames wrote in 1883, "mother Daniels, then a widow, made herself a hopeless invalid."

In December 1849, Joann's sister Mary Ann Daniels, then 23, sent her mother a copy of an essay she had written for a New Hampshire newspaper, the *Manchester Union*, entitled "A Sister's Love." It reads, in part:

"Happy is he whom heaven grants a sister. And thrice happy he, who in early life, permitted to enjoy her society--to share in her affection, her sympathy and counsel. Not all who are blessed with sisters can pass even childhood years with them. But does absence weaken their attachment? Methinks it is not often the case. I have in my mind now, two sisters, who, having been deprived of their father, were forced to be separate at the tender ages of two & four years.

"Nearly six years passed, during which time they seldom saw each other, [and then] they were permitted to spend a week together.

"Perhaps this affection for each other grew more out of the knowledge that they were sisters than from the faint recollection they cherished of the endearments of their early home. Yet so strong was their attachment that the idea of being separated again was almost intolerable..., the parting hour exceedingly painful. Several years have passed since that interview, but it is still remembered with pleasure as one of life's sunny spots. And earth affords them no greater joy than the privilege they occasionally have of rehearsing to each other their hopes and aspirations, their doubts and disappointments, and mingling their tears and smiles."

Marriage, 1850

Sara Jane met Charles Gordon Ames at a prayer meeting, where and when we do not know. We know that Charles was converted at age 13 to the Free-Will Baptist faith, that he worked in Dover for the printer of a Free-Will Baptist newspaper, that he determined to be a minister and preached his first sermon at the age of eighteen. Inspired by the Apostle Paul, he went west preaching where he could through Pennsylvania and Ohio, studied at Geauga Seminary near Cleveland, and taught school there. At age 20 he was formally ordained, received some voluntary payment from one of his congregations and with this money returned east. He obtained a position at a church in Tamworth Iron Works, New Hampshire, which promised a salary of \$300 a year. (For more on his life, see "Charles Gordon Ames, From Unwanted Child to Beloved Minister," elsewhere in this book.)

Three months later, Sara Jane and Charles, both 21, married. In a large Bible that he *received as a gift in 1853, on the ornately decorated page designated for recording marriages, Charles wrote, "Charles Gordon Ames and Sarah Jane Daniels rejoice in the memory of March 28, 1850, when at the house of Elder Elias Hutchins, Dover, N. H., they were by that beloved minister of Christ first pronounced 'Husband & Wife.' "

In his *Spiritual Autobiography*, Charles describes their relationship. "We were rich only in our common faith and love, rich, too, in ideals and aspirations, in a passionate love of souls, and in a theory and labor as unworldly and unselfish as the spirit of the New Testament, and our companionship became one of habitual study as well as of willingly accepted poverty and toil. Our acquaintance had begun in a prayer meeting; it is hardly a metaphor to say that it was a continuous prayer meeting for the next eleven years..."

The congregation in Tamworth Iron Works welcomed them, and they set up housekeeping in three rooms. Six chairs were enough, Charles said and "I made scruple about owning teacups, as it seemed doubtful whether we should supply to guests stimulating beverages from which we both felt bound to abstain." Twenty-five years later Charles Gordon wrote his son, "Perhaps you remember being told that it was in the house of...Abner Blaisdell that your mother and I first kept house at Tamworth Iron Works, N. H. in 1850; but you surely will never know a hundredth of the part of the kindness received by all of us from that family, nor the love which still follows us through all years and changes."

From the beginning life their life together was hard. Charles often lost favor because of his fierce opposition to slavery and to alcohol. But he would not back off. The intensity of his ministerial work, which he tried to keep at a revival pitch, led to what he described as "a most disabling form of nervous prostration" and an attack of a fever called "typhoid pneumonia."

This was the first of several serious illnesses and breakdowns during which Sara Jane nursed him. During his early years in Ohio, where he was a seminary student and itinerant preacher, he was frequently without adequate food and rest, and his intense studies and burning religious zeal kept his nervous system under continuing stress. His health was precarious for the rest of his life.

After leaving Tamworth Iron Works, the newlyweds went west to the seminary at Chester, Ohio, where Charles had studied. There he taught and Sara Jane studied. He was still ill and weak, and the future looked bleak.

Minnesota Days, 1851-53

In the summer of 1851, Charles saw an ad in the Free-Will Baptist newspaper, the *Morning Star*, offering a year's board for missionary work in St. Anthony, Minnesota Territory (now part of Minneapolis). The Home Mission Society would also provide a small supplementary grant. In the fall the young, ardent missionaries journeyed farther west. After taking the railroad to its end at Elgin, 45 miles west of Chicago, they had a two-day stage ride to Galena on the Mississippi River and four more days on a steamboat to St. Paul. At that time the entire west bank of the river was inhabited by Sioux Indians "whose unkempt and savage aspect," Charles wrote, "moved my wife to pitying tears." The trip a few miles upriver to St. Anthony was probably completed by coach.

Minnesota had become a Territory in 1849, with St. Paul as its capital. St. Anthony, with its recently established saw mill next to the falls of the Mississippi River, was awarded the university. A territorial census taken in the summer of 1849 had recorded its population as 4,535 whites and an estimated 25,000 Indians. Most of the settlers were concentrated in St. Paul, Stillwater, and St. Anthony.

To the newcomers from back east, the scene as they got off the steamboat must have been startling. First Territorial Governor Ramsey described what he saw on arrival in 1849: "The motley humanity partially filling these streets--the blankets and painted faces of Indians, and the red sashes and moccasins of French voyageurs and half-breeds--greatly predominating over the less picturesque costume of the Anglo-American race."

By the time of the Amesese's arrival, the non-Indian population of St. Paul had swelled to 2,500 and St. Anthony's to about 1,200. Charles wrote, "The village had a terrible flavor of red pine lumber, red Indians, and whiskey. There were Irish and half-breed French; the Roman Church was in the lead; four Protestant sects had made a beginning.... Was there room for one more church? For better or worse, we were on the ground and committed to the enterprise in the name of the Lord."

For six months they lived in the home of Mr. Harmon, the man who had placed the ad that had brought them west. "At the end," Charles wrote in his autobiography, "we were without adequate provision for support and entered with a kind of plucky

trustfulness on a life which was not unmixed with hardship." Their congregation made irregular additions to the small sum sent by the Home Mission, "but living was costly and at times precarious. We went in debt for an extremely small house; my wife kept boarders and taught a few children, while I worked much of the time as a compositor in a printing office. We paid for our house and lot, for a cow and horse and buggy. We saved up enough to enable a homesick woman to visit her relatives in New Hampshire, and I think several poor settlers would give us the credit of hospitality. But at the end of four years our church numbered hardly forty members."

By 1853, the Indians on the west bank of the Mississippi had agreed to a treaty moving them to land farther west, and the city of Minneapolis was quickly developed. Since most of Charles's congregation was moving to the new city, Charles and Sara Jane moved their home and church there, too. "Our little house was perhaps one of the first hundred in the new town. As new people came in, our number slowly increased and the openings for outside work were multiplied."

During the next three years, the world of ideas opened up for Charles and Sara Jane. They saw that their rigid Christian views were often at odds with the views of other Protestant ministers with whom they were trying to engage in mutual support. They were gaining a wider view of the world, and were exposed to books and thinking that opened their minds. By 1855, Charles was finding it increasingly difficult to continue preaching the narrow Free-Will Baptist line. His spiritual journey toward a free-thinking exploration of the relations of man to God, and his migration toward Unitarianism had begun. It took several years more, as is brilliantly described in "*A Spiritual Biography*," written toward the end of his life. (See "Charles Gordon Ames, From Unwanted Child to Beloved Minister," included in this volume.)

Charles and Sara Jane's widened horizons quickly led Charles to enter the fight for temperance and for the abolition of slavery. He edited the first Republican paper in Minnesota and was active in Republican politics, choosing the Republicans mainly because of their stand in favor of abolition.

A Hard, Busy Life, Minneapolis, 1852-53

Meanwhile, Sara Jane's experiences during these first Minnesota years were as housekeeper, minister's wife, and Sunday school teacher. What we know of their life in these years comes from letters she and Charles wrote to Sara Jane's mother Joann, who was living in North Wolfeboro, NH with her brother Lewis Whitehouse and his wife Sarah.

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In March, 1852, Charles wrote, "We have been struggling along through a dark and trying time of late, as people here are interested in almost everything but vital godliness, but we are not without hope that good seed is being sown which shall yet spring up.... I have felt called upon to spend considerable time and strength of late in laboring for the Temperance Cause.... We hope to succeed, through the blessing of

God, and save our young Territory from growing up to habits of rowdyism and drunkenness....”

Sara Jane added, “We are very happy in our new abode, moved in March 3rd. Our donation visit passed off very pleasantly on the evening previous about 100 being present--\$80 worth in money and clothing, etc., etc. I succeeded well in my [Sunday] school, and at the urgent request of a number of the parents I commence a private school one week from Tuesday. I dread it considerably, as it will be quite a task to do my work and teach. I have but little time to write, as I have a good deal of sewing to do and a boarder to take care of. My health is quite good....”

But she teaches only for six weeks. The stress of two boarders and 50 students is too much. She writes to ask if Joann is visiting grandma Whitehouse (in Rochester NH) and reports, "The mice ate the table cloth she [Grandma] gave, or rather gnawed it badly, but I mended it as nicely as possible; and if she will only make us a call about tea time, she shall have some nice Graham pudding and milk off from it, if it only happens to be clean."

As the summer of 1852 passes, Charles writes about how low the river is. He predicts that prices will be very high if rain doesn't come soon, since the river will be too low for the steamboats that bring almost all supplies up the river. He also mentions that his health is so poor that he is thinking of leaving if another minister can be found to take his place.

Sarah Jane is suffering from digestive problems. She says she works most of the time but doesn't accomplish much. She hasn't done her washing for three or four weeks. “We have consulted two physicians, one a young man, the other old and had much experience. The first would not give me any medicine but advised me to diet but be sure to take nourishing food, be a great-deal in the open air, and keep my mind in as quiet and cheerful frame as possible. The other says that my disease is of the spine, that it commenced eight years ago the summer that I took care of you at Uncle Garland's.... He wishes to put a blister on my spine half the length of it--cup in my back, bleed me...and meanwhile to go to bed and get somebody to do my work.

“Now mother, you know how hard it is for dyspeptics to recover strength once lost & I shall consent to no such thing. Cold weather will probably be a benefit to me, and I think my difficulty is not yet so sick but some simple medicines will prove a remedy. At all events, give yourself no uneasiness for I am still quite a woman can walk two miles with but little fatigue....”

As fall approaches they decide they cannot live through the winter in their not-yet-finished and unheated house. “It is not best to finish it at present, and it would be rather too cold for our forty-degrees-below-zero winter.” In November they moved back into the Harmons' house. They occupy their old sitting room and sleep upstairs. They have their rent free in exchange for plastering and papering their sitting room.

Food costs are very high--butter 40 cents a pound in St. Paul and none to be had in St. Anthony. Some fear scarcity of food, but Charles writes that they have plenty of provisions. "The garden sauce furnished from our 'acre' comes into use just right, and the money we have been able to save through Sara Jane's labor and economy has enabled us to purchase what groceries, etc., we need." An unknown friend sent them a box of provisions worth nine dollars.

Early in 1853 they have secured a permanent meeting place in the Baptist church on Sunday afternoons. The Sunday School is thriving, with 30 children. Several months later Sara Jane mentions that her dyspepsia remains, though better than in the fall. "I did not conclude to take any medicine & so have had nothing to do with Drs. Bathing & dieting I have found of great benefit."

In one letter she reports that she has just been to lay a little babe in its coffin. (She is asked often to come on such occasions because she has no children and thus her time is freer than women who do.) She writes her mother: "Dear little babe, as its parents were not Christian and it would be likely to grow-up irreligious, I rejoiced in its departure." As the minister's wife, she has been asked to serve as president of the Baptist sewing circle.

"I have a girl with me now who works for her board and studies," she writes. "I could get along well enough alone if it were not for washing & ironing, but after doing such work as that, or scrubbing floors, my back trembles, my food distresses me and I do not get over it for some time."

In the spring they exchanged their unfinished house for one which is finished and has a good cellar and a well. Sara Jane writes to her mother: "I was reminded just now, while taking my dinner at the buttery shelf, of my mother's oft-expressed wish for a snug little home, and it seemed as though this was just-the-place. I did so much wish that you were here to live with us. Our house is very pleasant. The lower part is painted (save the cook room, which is still unfinished) and the trimmings of the chambers.... We have almost done without furniture since we have been here, but Mr. Ames thought it not best to try it any longer, so we have a nice new table, work stand & bed steads, none of them painted, simply varnished. We are going to purchase another bed stead this week and shall probably have still another given to us. Brother Harmon has given us the use of bedsteads till now.

"Then we have such a nice new stove and so many fixings with it. A wash boiler, pot kettle, tea kettle, meat-gridiron, two flipper griddles, spider (a griddle with short handles), coffee pot, two baking pans, two long tins, two three-pint basons [variation on "basin"], and a steamer.... The stove is rather small size, but I can put into the oven three-pint basons and a long tin at one time and have a large wash boiler. O, I forgot to mention among the list a flatiron heater. Now, mother, can you find fault with me for not giving the particulars?"

Her health is somewhat better. She writes her mother that she thinks her dyspepsia to be only a nervous difficulty brought on in part by too much work the previous year. She reports that whenever she and Charles have company, or she is away from home, her food digests much better than when they are alone.

They have obtained access to a half-acre on which to grow food, which Charles says will be worth \$50, and he has onions, peas and a few potatoes already in the ground. Sara Jane had collected forty or fifty kinds of flower seeds, and "if half of them grow we shall be fully well perfumed." The cost of milk, butter, and meat continue high.

Charles writes that they have as many worldly possessions as they ought to want. They "enjoy a degree of favor and good will in the community which is quite surprising." He feels that it would be better for them to be like Jesus, "despised & rejected of men," than to have their souls "beguiled by smiles." With all their numerous blessings, he is often unhappy at the thought that they are accomplishing so little good, that they have drawn so few into Christian ways. "Pray that we may be kept humble, even if it be by adversity."

The Tug of Conscience, 1852-54

From the time Charles and Sara Jane left New Hampshire for the west, they suffered guilt and conflicted emotions about leaving Sara Jane's invalid mother behind, in the care of others. In a letter written in the spring of 1852, Charles calls her "enfeebled Mother," tells her how much they wish they were with her, how they would do everything to "avoid every word, every deed, which should add to the burden of your griefs, or which should cause your smitten heart to bleed again." He goes on to say that the love of her children may be a consolation, but, "Oh mother, there is a better Friend for you; and my warmest, highest desire for you is that you may continually lean upon His bosom, and be at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sara Jane's minister brother, John W. Daniels, writes he feels so bad about mother and sister as to often make his head ache. He fears her sister, Mary Ann, who apparently has consumption, will not survive the winter. "It seems sometimes while thinking of it as though my heart will break, but the will of the Lord be done," he writes.

"Mother, dear Mother, do not grieve for my absence," Sara Jane writes. "Whenever we feel that our work is done here, I hope to return and make a home for you. And if we come back, we shall leave you no more. On account of our health Charles sent in his resignation to the Board last fall, but we heard nothing from it.... If Mary Ann should not live & you could stand the journey I should much prefer to have you come West to coming back East to live. Would you be willing to do so if we come after you?... If we meet no more on earth we will still hope to meet among the blessed in glory."

In addition to her guilt, Sarah Jane is homesick for her childhood home and her family. "The scenery about here is beautiful beyond description, she writes. "Mine eyes never beheld so lovely a spot, yet I would rather go back to New England."

In March 1853, Charles writes to Joann, "Hard to believe that three winters have passed since that sad farewell was said to our weeping mother." If she could come to them, they would probably make Minnesota their permanent home, he says. "There is great need for the Gospel in the West, for infidelity, universalism, money worship, political corruption, and every form of vice and error grow rankly and ruinously. Everything shows that without the Gospel, these new parts of the country would be Satan's great harvest-field.... Soon the river will be open, and crowds of settlers and visitors will arrive. We almost dread it as it makes people forget God."

Joann writes back that given her health, coming west is out of the question. Charles and Sara Jane, though in agony over their conflicting obligations, are becoming more and more committed to Minnesota. Charles writes that they are getting more deeply involved in the community, men are urging Charles to stay, and the Home Mission Society back east says there is no suitable person to replace him. The climate, he says, is as good as any they had lived in. Again he says she could travel by small stages, resting often, and that Sara Jane would be with her.

Charles leaves the decision to Sara Jane, over which her emotions are rubbed raw. "But my dear mother," she writes, "you cannot know how I have longed to have you with us, and how sensibly I have felt that we did wrong in leaving you.... I dare not say go and leave all these interests, neither dare I say stay and leave my mother to the care of others, a duty which so naturally devolves upon me. You said you should feel beholden wherever you lived, but less with us. Does your labor so many years for Sara Jane call for me to return? O mother, I can never, even if we both live to old age, repay the one hundredth part of your kindness...."

By July Charles writes that Sara Jane is suffering less and that he can do nearly twice as much as in the last summer. As to their future, he tells Joann, he feels conscience-stricken at leaving her for three years, but he is glad they came to Minnesota. He thinks that had he stayed at Tamworth, his poor constitution would have been ruined. In Minnesota he has learned a lot that "will be worth more than gold." New opportunities for service keep opening up and whenever they speak of leaving, many people tell them that leaving would be wicked--they cannot be spared. But their decision is not final--it will be made by September 1. They want to hear from her what she thinks and feels about their plans.

A week later Charles writes that Sara Jane has finally yielded to his appeals and will visit New England that summer for two or three months. She wants to see "Lydia Foss, Bro. Burr & her sister Mary Ann," and he "shouldn't wonder if she should avail herself of the opportunity to visit you a little if you desire it." He will stay and look after home and church.

Sara Jane leaves soon after. While she was gone, Lucy Harrow was to keep house for Charles and their two boarders. Charles reports her an excellent girl, and says he would feel well cared for and happier to be staying in the house. "Then there is the cow you know. She will feel bad to see the house all shut up, and nobody to salt her."

Once in the east Sara Jane writes her mother from Dover. She had arrived more than a week ago in safety, is going to see Mary Ann that week, and expected to be with her mother by the last of the following week. Her health is "as good as usual," she says.

Following this letter there is two-year gap in the correspondence. Joann Daniels was to remain in the east for another five years, and only came West in 1859, when the Ameses moved to Bloomington, Illinois.

Serena Huntley Joins the Family, 1854

Serena Huntley was legally adopted by Charles and Sara Jane in 1856. In later years she married George Wright. Their courtship was carried on largely by mail from the fall of 1858 until their wedding in June 1860. Early on they exchanged autobiographies. (Both letters are now in the George Burdick Wright Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society.) A few excerpts from Serena's letter will serve to outline her life history until her adoption.

"A. D. 1840 I opened my eyes in Wesley, Maine, on the Sixth of August. Wesley is a small, quiet town, in the very extreme extremity of civilization in dear old Maine. Ten years I lived there, ten very smooth, still years that seem to me more like a sunshiny day than they do like the greater part of my life. My Father died while I was yet a very little child, only six months old....

"My Mother was my all in all and to be with her my happiness. Soon after my Father's death, she was married to my step-Father, the Father of my sisters. He was to me ever a kind Father...his treatment of me, as I see it now was, if possible, more than Fatherly, more tender than his treatment of his own children, not because of greater love, but rather because of lesser feeling.

"I think he tried sincerely to make home pleasant and happy for my Mother, who was a sad woman, one of those unfortunate people who see the dark side of this world continually turned toward them....

"The fall I was ten my Step-Father proposed we move to Minnesota. My Mother rebelled but after many...arguments and entreaty on one side and objections and coaxing on the other, it was decided.... It was indeed a sorry day for Mother that turned our faces westward. Her heart was crushed in the Farewells spoken to Father, brothers and sisters. She was sadder than ever in the little time she staid with us. Not quite a year, and she left us. My heart was indeed desolate. I mourned for her as only a loving child can for a loving Mother."

Left with four little girls to find care for, Serena's father readily acquiesced when a neighbor, Mrs. Dorr, asked to have Serena make her a visit of a few weeks. The visit stretched to almost two years. Mrs. Dorr was sick and cross and often unkind. During Serena's stay Mr. Dorr, a kind man, died. Mrs. Dorr soon married again and then fought bitterly with her new seventeen-year-old stepson. Serena's only friends during this unhappy time were, she reported, Mr. and Mrs. Ames, her minister and Sunday School teacher, whom she learned to love dearly.

In the spring of 1854, her foster mother decided to go away for a visit, and arranged to have Serena stay with the Ameses and attend school at the Academy in St. Anthony. "I went home that day," Serena wrote. When her stepmother returned, "I chose to remain where I was, rather than to take up my cross with her.... I lived happily two years with Mr. & Mrs. Ames as Serena Miriam Huntley, and in the winter of Fifty-six, by act of Legislature, Serena Maria Ames was to the world what she had long been by virtue of love, the child of Charles Gordon and Sarah Jane Ames. My dear Father and Mother! God bless them!"

A son, Charles Melville Ames, 1855

On June 30, 1855, Charles writes to Joann, "I snatch a moment to tell that this morning at half past two, we first heard the cry of our own little boy. Mrs. Ames's confinement has been severe, lasting some 38 hours. She is of course much exhausted, but bright and cheerful, and we hope for the best. Her physician has been tender and careful and so have the ladies in attendance. Your grandson resembles you more nearly than he does either of us.... His hair is red..., weighs 8 pounds and a half, duds and all."

In the family Bible Charles records the birth and the child's name, Charles Melville Ames. "Melville" would later be changed to "Wilberforce," for which there is no recorded explanation. It is likely that the new middle name was in honor of William Wilberforce, the great English anti-slavery crusader. They called the child "Willie," "Patrick Henry," and by Serena "Pet."

Twenty years later, reminiscing about Sara Jane, Charles Gordon writes his son, "March 1855 -- four months before your debut -- we were living in that house at the head of Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, with only two other houses in sight. We kept a cow, a red cow, and on the 4th of the month, she brought us a heifer calf and sold her when one year old for \$15."

Serena Goes Away to School, 1855-56

In the winter of 1855-56 Serena is sent to school in Hillsdale, Michigan, of which Charles writes, "Other schools might furnish more rich and luxuriant surroundings, but we know of none where healthful and noble influences will more abound." Loving letters flow back and forth. "Today brought a precious letter from our distant daughter," Charles writes. "You can hardly know how deep is the interest with which we read every line."

His letters are often filled with advice about health, development of character, and spiritual life. Some characteristic quotes:

--"I would not have you bold, and unwomanly, or rude; nor would I have you take pleasure in displaying any good qualities or capacities with which Providence may have entrusted you. It is one thing to be forward, and quite another thing to be ready for service."

-- "I have written one sheet about Willie. Perhaps I had better fill a part of this with words about Reno [Serena's nickname]--our older child, who being far from us, amid the perils of schoolgirl life, is often in our thoughts, our conversation and our prayers. She hardly needs to be assured that we love her. The very reason why she is away is evidence of our interest in her welfare. We love her and therefore we would have her thoroughly fitted and trained for the activities of a useful life...."

-- "Sleep all you can by going to bed regularly at 9, if possible. You will live enough longer to more than make it up, besides having more enjoyment in living."

-- He urges Serena against laying nothing on herself, in mind or body, which would "prove a severe tax. Favor your head, eyes, stomach, back and your whole self." He tells her to do well what she does and measure her progress in her growing self-control, her increased coolness, self-possession and deliberation.

-- Several months later he revisits this theme. "And another danger is that into which both her father and mother have fallen, viz., to be so anxious to do a great deal in a little time, as to unfit yourself to do much of anything. A great deal of wisdom is required to combine the elements of a good moral character in proper proportions; and more still to couple with such a character a body which shall be in good working order."

-- In the winter of 1856-57: "Your last letter tells of sore eyes again. We are very sorry; but we shall never feel that your time is lost, simply because you cannot study in books. Reflection on what we have learned is not less necessary than an addition to the stock on hand. And it is but little good to learn, if it does not help us to find inward sources of comfort where outward sources are cut off. Enjoy your inward nature, as you will when you better understand it...."

Spiritual and Emotional Turmoil, 1855-56

In the months following Willie's birth, we have no information about domestic arrangements or Sara Jane's activities or health. We do know from Charles's *A Spiritual Autobiography* that in 1855 and 1856, he suffers great intellectual and emotional turmoil, in which Sara Jane no doubt shares. In that book, he writes that in the winter of 1855-56 the strain was too much for him, and he "ran away for three months to New England." On his return in the spring of 1856, he and Sara Jane resign from the Free-Will Baptist church they had started four years before.

In the fall he is nominated by the Republicans for Register of Deeds of Hennepin County which, he writes, "probably pays as well as any in the Territory, \$2000 a year and lasts for two years. I hope I shall not be elected if it would be unfavorable to the highest welfare of myself or others." He is elected. And while he searches for a new faith, he continues his anti-slavery activities.

A Serious Illness While Traveling, 1856

In August-September 1856, Charles and Sara Jane travel east, apparently on business related to printing. Suddenly, in Elmira, NY, Charles writes to Serena, "Through the long night, Mrs. Ames had one of the worst sick spells she has ever had, and finally got relief only by taking morphine. She has been so feeble since that I have not left her. Had she been as well as usual, she would have gone on to New York with me and visited her brother. As it is, she will go if she gets better by the last of this week so as to render it safe for her to travel. But her present symptoms are not favorable. Dr. Gleason, however, is quite confident she can get well. He attributes her illness almost entirely to an over-tasked brain, too much reading, too much care, too much nervous excitement, and too little rest and sleep.... I think she will get over it, but it may require a long time, and much suffering on account of her having taken so much wrong medicine. She will have to go without her food much more; and will have to do it when she feels well; thus preventing her stomach from getting into so bad a state."

Ten days later, still in Elmira, Charles writes that Sara Jane has had another bad spell after not eating for several days and then eating some dried toasted bread. She took five doses of morphine but got no relief. "The doctor's wife gave her a potion for her liver; and that plus several hours of rubbing accompanied with outward and inward application of ice, had brought a relief, though she still had considerable pain."

This pattern of sickness was to plague Sara Jane for the five years still left to her.

Back in Minneapolis, 1856-57

At the end of September 1856, they arrive home and find everybody well. Willie, then 15 months old, knows them both, Charles believes. He writes Serena, "He walks round the house grand as a king and can hardly be kept still for a minute. Brother Bigelow's folks are very kind to him and fond of him.... Your mother is much better...still

suffers much from weakness and nervousness but continues to improve by eating twice per day." But Sara Jane is still suffering from nerves, and "it hurts her to write."

Mainly from Charles's letters to Serena, we learn of their life for the next eight months.

-- They rent part of the house of a Mrs. Jeule's-- "the back part and one chamber for \$12 a month."

-- Sara Jane hires a woman to work for them, but the arrangement doesn't last; it makes Sara Jane nervous. Charles rubs her feet, hands and back every night and morning. "It does a great deal of good," Charles writes, "and I do it a long time...." By December, Sara Jane has inflamed eyes for a week and is recovering from a cold.

-- A bit later, Charles reports to Serena that to ease Sara Jane's distress, they have only two meals a day: "Mrs. Ames is also better, as I judge from the same kind of evidence as in my own case; she works so hard! I try to hold her back, but it is of no use; and I try to make the best of it. Miss Rebecca Drum...is now with us, sewing. She is a pleasant girl, and a profitable one to hire, doing the work well and rapidly. Once in two weeks, Mrs. Flanigan, an Irish widow woman with four children, comes over from St. Anthony and does the washing on Tuesdays, going home with a dollar in her pocket. The Friday following she comes again and irons, for the same amount of money. We pay her toll."

-- Their minds must always be on economy. "Mrs. Ames has undertaken to reduce our household expenses. I pay her \$7.00 per week, and she makes all purchases of provisions, fuel, lights and clothing for herself and Melville. A rigid account is kept of every item. Besides this I have to pay the rent, \$12 a month, buy my own clothes, meet all out-of-door expenses and pay the washerwoman and all other hired help. So you see, what I pay to Mrs. A. is really less than half of what it costs us to live. It takes a heap of money, but somehow we live, through the mercy of Providence, and still expect to pay all bills."

In February 1857, Sara Jane once again feels up to writing. To Serena she says that they have just received her picture. A "shadow stole over her heart" as she sees how rapidly Serena is passing into womanhood. "Will ever our family circle be again complete? Shall we ever be permitted to cease our prayers for the dear absent member of household?"

They cannot afford to visit Serena in Hillsdale, she says. "Do the best we can, it costs us a great deal to live. Our expenses for the last two months have overrun \$400. For hired help in the house it has cost not less than \$60 in that time and yet it seems I have strictly obeyed the apostolic injunction to 'be diligent in business'...."

Sara Jane then describes one of her days, not atypical. "My health is very good, else I could not work as I do, though I am not quite as well at night as usual. Perhaps I

worked a little too hard Saturday. I rose at four, scrubbed on the kitchen floor till daylight, cooked all day, washed the floor again at night, ironed some clothes for Willie after dark, got ready to sit down for the first time at seven o'clock, then sewed on a dress to finish up my day's work till half past nine. I feel the effect of it some." No wonder!

In April 1857, after the river has opened, Serena comes home and goes to work in Charles's office, copying deeds. We have no more correspondence until December, 1857, when Charles writes to his mother-in-law. He is unwell that day and so staying close to home. "Tell uncle and aunt that I am very sorry that circumstances do not allow us to spend this winter in New England. I wish to send you some money, but cannot find any that would be good and current in New Hampshire. If Uncle L. (Lewis Whitehouse) can borrow some for me, and hand it to you, he can hold the enclosed note as security against me. This is the only plan I can think of. Your own son, Charles." On the back Charles has written a letter dictated by Willie, then 2 1/2. Willie says he is learning his letters. Charles spells it 'yearning' and 'yettters' " Apparently Willie is having trouble with l's.

Sara Jane and Willie visit relatives in New England, 1858

In April 1858, Sara Jane takes Willie and heads east, possibly because of a serious turn in her mother's health. Or perhaps her guilt at not being with her mother has become too much to bear. During the following six months, until Serena joins her, they correspond frequently and thus we have a more detailed record of Sara Jane's thoughts and feelings than for any other period of her life. There are also regular letters between husband and wife, but only a few have survived.

As soon as Sara Jane leaves, Charles and Serena move out of their house and go to board with the Browns. There they have two rooms and share the parlor with the family and other boarders. Serena reports that everyone is deaf. Their meals are adequate but not what they had had in their own home. Mrs. Brown promises better when the crops come in. The hardest part is not having anywhere to sit in the evening. They often go for walks in the evenings and on weekends. On one of these walks, Serena writes, "We went down through Irishdom, and saw children and men crawling from their beds out into the glorious morning with no more thought of the sweet day than the pigs we saw grubbing about them.... They are all our brethren, made and watched over by the same Father, yet I think we may thank God that we are not as these men are."

Serena works in her father's office copying deeds. Charles is very active in the anti-slavery movement. He preaches often, sometimes to very large crowds, up to 1,000 on the island in the Mississippi between St. Anthony and Minneapolis. His sermons, Serena says, are often considered heretical. Many of them are about the evil of slavery, which makes him very unpopular with many people, but she thinks "he will live through it and come out bright and shiny.... The Universalists are his friends...and

the Orthodox Christians shun him. Can there be greater evidence that he is far down the road to ruin?"

She writes often of how much she misses her mother and bemoans various domestic difficulties. The night Sara Jane and little Charles left: "I was almost blind from crying for I did cry in spite of resolves.... I didn't kiss Pet. I couldn't, it was all I could do to say good-bye to you. Bless him! What a hurry he was in to start. Did he get very tired of riding on the cars?"

In July: "O, you can not tell how much I miss you! I feel a lone, lorn Criture, and everything goes contrary.... I could not, if I was to try, enumerate half the grievances I am subject to, and all because I have no mama! There is dressing myself, don't you often think of me putting on a belt ribbon crooked or having my collar awry or something. It is a lamentable fact that I have not yet learned how to dress. Then there is poor, dear Papa. I guess he often groans in spirit.... Sabbath morning comes and finds him with shirts minus buttons, pants with some rips in them, and me with a heart full of deep repentance. And I do so long, with precious Pet, to have some dinner at our own table. I want somebody, just you, to talk with, too.... I am as ever your fond, disobedient & affectionate Reno."

As the summer goes on, Serena writes her mother about their domestic situation. "Mama, I wish you could see our clothes after they have been washed by Peter's wife. They are as black and blue as a bruised arm. I am not going to let her have the clothes after today. She does the washing quite cheap, and I hate to take it away but must. Did we write you that Papa suspected Mrs. Houston of stealing and therefore would not let her have the washing? I don't know who we shall get to do it...."

Judging from a letter of Serena's, responding to one of Sara Jane's is (which we do not have), Sara Jane has gone to North Wolfeboro, NH, where her mother was in the care of Sarah and Lewis Whitehead. It is an isolated place, and the home atmosphere there, centered around the bedridden Joann, is gloomy. On hearing this, Serena is so upset, she threatens to come to New Hampshire to take her mother away:

"Mama, can't any of the sunshine creep in among the Hills of New Hampshire? The shadows of the Mountains seem to have fallen across your soul and shut out even the Star-light. Your letter was precious, but it made us sad to see the strivings to rid your self of those black shadows, or rather we were sad to know there were shadows to strive against. Try to get up high enough to look over the dark forms into the sunshine of next fall.

"Go to Abby's [a cousin] if it's possible, won't you? I think you will feel more freedom, in every respect, with her. And it would be such a nice thing to live a while in Boston! Theodore Parker, Mr. Clarke and Unitarians to hear talk, people to see, and the whole City to go about in.

“But Mama, let me say here that if you do your washing, I shall turn Witch, jump on a broomstick and alight in your wash-tub some day when you least expect me. If you have any compassion, if you enjoy any of the goods of charity, if you have any heart, or if you expect to have any health, do not, I pray you, wash. Why, the knowledge of your doing so would certainly give me wings! You will not do it, I know.”

And in a subsequent letter: “Mama, There is one of two things that must be done! Either you go to Boston and stay and not show yourself at Aunt Sarah's this summer, or I go to New Hampshire, and that pretty quick. Two more such letters like the one we got today, and I die. Now it don't make any difference how bright you try to write, if you are at Wolfeboro, I shall know all about what your are doing. I feel downright mad!....”

“So you and Pet are both sick. Well, I can only hope you are with Abby now. Why don't you say that you are sick and cannot do it? And if there is no helping it there, have your Mother go somewhere else. Or come home, for it is not your duty to kill my Mother; and I am sure your Mother would rather have you in the world, even if you were eight hundred miles away, than to have you leave it.”

Sara Jane in Boston, Among Unitarians and Transcendentalists, 1858

Sara Jane does go to Abby's in South Boston, where she is much happier, but very homesick. She asks Serena to write oftener; two weeks is too long to wait between letters. She complains that they never mention her letters to them. At one time late in a very low mood, she apparently threatens to stop writing. Serena insists they write often, frequently every day. They don't write about her letters because there are so many other things to tell: “Mama don't talk of your letters as though we did not prize them. They are our living chiefly, without the poorest of them our lives would be more dreary.”

On a more cheerful note, and apparently feeling better, Sara Jane writes from Boston about the sermons she has heard and the books she is reading. She had heard a sermon by Starr King, a well known Unitarian minister, about the role of suffering. Pain is a blessing, he said, since it warns of the approach of disease of the body, and mental suffering has the same end, to warn of declining spiritual health and what spiritual laws are causing it. Whenever there is any dissatisfaction with the present state of any longings after a higher life, he said, there is still hope.

Sara Jane promises to send copies of Starr's sermon and also one of Dr. Adams's, to which Starr's was an answer. “I have not ceased to regret that I did not get here last week...[when] I could have seen and heard Wendell Phillips, Garrison, Dr. Channing, etc., etc.” She had walked three miles in the city the day before and somewhere read a volume of Emerson's Essays “with real delight a long time.” She closed this letter with: “Respectfully remember me to Mr. Ames and tell him when convenient, I should be happy to hear from him.”

In another letter from Abby's she writes Serena: "How much I do want to see you! I lie down at night, and when I rise in the morning the dear absent ones are first in thought going out or coming in, seeing or hearing that which gives me pleasure or profit-how shall I make it seem a living reality to the dear ones far away. I have written so little during the past year that I find much more difficulty in giving you clear and vivid impressions of what I hear and see than formerly." Abby's baby may have the measles, in which case she (Sara Jane) is in for it. "I shall have a good nurse, and a good homeopathic physician in Abby." Later she reports that Willie might have measles, and her own stomach is swollen. She has again become troubled with nerves and an inclination to vomit, as well as some diarrhea. She has done some teaching but resolves to do no more. Willie wants her to promise never to whip him again.

One day she writes from the Bigelow School, having come, she said, with Mary Louise, Abby's daughter, because Abby wouldn't let her go alone. "Everyone who is first in class receives a medal and a dinner at Faneuil Hall at city's expense. 1200 medal children will meet this afternoon. It would be much better if the medals were all in the bottom of the Atlantic. It keeps strife and ill will among the children continually.... I bought Mrs. Child's letters from N. Y., I think complete in one volume, at an old book stall yesterday for 25 cents. I shall enjoy it very much when I go up country." She says her head aches, she is more fit to be in bed than in Boston, and she has a violent cold. "I purpose to go to Wolfeboro this week, or the first of next, to stay I do not know how long. I dread it very much but it is duty."

Still in Boston she writes Serena, "I am thinking how sick I was a little more than one year since, and of your unwearying care and patience during my illness. O those dreadful days! I cannot think of them without a shudder. My health is certainly better than at any time since Willie's birth. How much cause for gratitude and carefulness! And the approaching first of August reminds that my daughter is almost eighteen years old. Had Mr. Bean called on his return you would have received a birthday present. I presume he is now in Minnesota. As it is you will receive my earnest benediction such as ever must remain in a mother's heart strong and pure for her child."

She continues: "Willie is up and we have breakfasted on blackberry pie. I have just been reading Emerson. Indulge me in a few quotations," and she adds some. She has been to Mount Auburn cemetery in Cambridge and found it beautiful. She went past Longfellow's house on the way.

Serena continued to write often. She inquires about her mother's scrapbook and whether she has added many gems to it since she left. She thinks of it every time she sees some particularly good poem. And about her own reading she says, "I too have been reading Shakespeare this summer some.... I like *Hamlet* best of all I have read. I do not like [the plays], not because I cannot read them with interest, but I think they are rather wicked. I have concluded not to read any more of them." On another occasion she comments to Sara Jane, "It seems to me you and the Unitarians are very friendly."

Twenty years later, recalling this period in Sara Jane's life, Charles writes his son, "In 1858, when you accompanied your mother East from Minn., you both spent part of the summer at Mr. Short's, there in So. Boston--greatly to the satisfaction of your mother, who there first made the acquaintance of Boston Unitarians and heard Starr King, Jas. F. Clarke & Theodore Parker, each of whom was to her as an angel from on high. Mrs. Short tells me of the wonderful glow on Sarah Jane's face when she would come in from a visit to the Unitarian Rooms, where she met numbers of wise and worthy people. The letters she wrote me that summer are stowed, with all hers, in the closet of the Library at Mr. Egleston, Santa Cruz. Someday I hope you'll get the reading of them."

Sara Jane in North Wolfeboro, amid frequent gloom, 1858

After two months in Boston, Sara Jane returns to North Wolfeboro. From there she writes Serena that she had gone for a walk up "Mount of Vision." She describes her joy at the view, and the experience: "A panorama of beauty spread out before such as my eyes never saw till I came here, my heart rejoicing and resting in your love and one other not at all forgotten.... I crave to write but it is not of this place that I must speak.

"Mother is not thought to be near as well today. Indeed, Uncle Louis Daniels says that he doesn't think she can live two days. To me it seems as though she has yet a great deal life of vitality. There is a marked change in her. She is quite petulant, more so today than I ever saw her, has more appetite today than usual. I have stayed too long already. Ere I go my heart must find peace by seeking communion with heaven. Yesterday I came up here so bruised in spirit but was soothed and strengthened beyond the telling by my half hour tarrying.... Friday AM Mother is no better this morning. I have been up with her nearly all night and I am very tired. I am going to lie down and try to rest awhile, if not sleep. How it will turn I still cannot say."

A few days later, Sara Jane writes: "No letter tonight. I ought not to have expected it very confidently, as I suppose the Anti-Slavery Picnic absorbs a good deal of your Papa's time, but the time seems so long in the country, and it has now been more than four days since I left Boston."

But from time to time, her spirits rise: "I am seated in the door with my writing desk in my lap, under the shade of four large trees, Willie beside me reading *Old Mother Rabbit*, with his blocks, wheel barrow and other playthings littered over the granite door steps. I have my buff dress, wrought linen collar, cameo pin and white cord with seven tassels on. Can you see me? It is near the close of a beautiful day. Now that I have told you how I am situated, I must leave and get Mother's supper and make her bed. I sometimes very much wish you could be here and we keep house, but perhaps it is better as it is."

She says she had dreamt she "went to Papa's room and gave Serena a call and embrace and blessing. Last night after I left writing, my heart overflowed with quiet joy.

All duties seemed easily performed. Even the absence from or the breaking up of our family circle, a trifle while each member went in health and the heart beating so strongly for all the rest. Blessed be our God for these relationships, and it is not after all so much that as the kindred spirits, the relations we sustain, making us acquainted with each other's souls. Death cannot dissolve our love, for it has an immutable foundation."

She says she thinks her mother more comfortable. Nobody else thinks so, but Sara Jane says Joann might live a long time. However, she can't understand the spells her mother have once in every 24 hours. Her breathing becomes difficult, her left hand cold, and her circulation almost ceases. "She has great distress near the heart, and a good deal of nausea at the stomach. But the sicker at the stomach the less troubled for breath. It might be an hour or two that she was troubled about breathing, the strangling did not last quite five minutes. It has been thirty days that she has had this. I wish Mr. Ames would ask some of the Drs about this and tell me what they say."

She adds that Willie has gone with his uncle to pick peas for dinner, that Aunt Sarah was perhaps a little better and that she felt "improved since last Sunday. If I could ever get over my cold, I think my health would be very good."

A Summer of Loneliness and Hard Work, 1858

After reading her mother's letter from Wolfeboro telling of Joann's increased illness, Serena writes her: "My poor tired, sick and worn-out Mother, what can I say to you? May you find comfort and peace in Him who looked in love upon all his children. Oh, if we could be with you now, how much we might say and do that would make your heart more light, and burdens easier to bear...."

With good reason, Sara Jane finds North Wolfeboro intellectually and emotionally barren. Letter after letter to Serena show how hard Sara Jane finds it to be isolated from those with whom she can exchange the thoughts and sentiments of the heart, those to whom her soul can respond. But her faith supports her; she often writes of her privations as holy lessons designed by God to bring her further into a more perfect way of being.

From these many letters come the following quotes:

-- "I am getting tired of my books, and my ever restless brain asks something more or else somebody to talk them over with. Shakespeare has not been taken out of my trunk. Mother will ask me about it, and as she feels so badly if I spend a penny, I have not thought it prudent to bring it forward. No, I take it all back, but I do want to talk to somebody desperately. Do you wonder? This is dangerous and forbidden ground."

-- "Mr. Ames [writes] go out and get acquainted. Mother does not like to have me away, and Aunt Sarah stays at home very closely and thinks everybody else ought to do so. There is nobody that I care particularly to visit,... and so I stay at home. In the three

weeks I have twice been into Mrs. Young's on an errand, and once into Mrs. Tibbett's, one half-day to meeting, and that comprises the going out--not even three steps for a walk. My precious books afford me very much of comfort, and then to be able to do something for Mother is a source of pleasure. So day after day passes. I awake in the nights to take care of Mother, and if it is past midnight I think another day is safely past and rejoice in the thought, without daring to think of those that are to follow..."

-- "I am very much ashamed, dear child, of the repinings you have heard of late, and if I can help it you shall not be so troubled again. God helps us to bear the day's burdens, but not the accumulation of three hundred and sixty five days, and if we take it up no wonder that we find ourselves unequal to the task."

-- "Among all the little troubles, of some of them I have spoken and others your imagination will supply growing out of the situation in which I am placed, I am daily seeking to grow at the age of thirty into a woman. The varied experiences through which I have passed will yet, I know, prove a blessing, and I am anxious so to use these months so that Mother and my dear family may be blessed thereby.... Every aspiration of yours after true womanhood gladdens your mother's heart. Remember that you are to 'learn to do well and be not discouraged by failures.' Seek help from God and never despair, for you are made in His image."

Responding to a report from Serena about a gentleman friend Serena has met: "So you have another hero! Well, he will be thrown overboard like the rest in a few months.... I got through with my hero worship some time ago. My husband, take him all in all, is the best man I know, and he has some faults, very small to be sure, but enough so that I can hold very precious communion with him. And it will be hard living without that interchange of thought and feeling till next January.... One great source of discontent is that I have so hard work to maintain my independence. I keep up a constant warfare in that respect, for the instant I give place to any other state of mind, I am very wretched.... All I wish [is that] we had Willie, along with Mother, somewhere at our own home."

-- "I am sitting at the foot of Mother's bed and a glance tells me she is impatient with this writing, so I finish."

-- "Thursday: What have I done today? Not much. I hardly know, but I am just ready to sit down, and it is now four o'clock. Mother said as I took up my writing desk, 'I see you are taking your knitting work.' I finished ironing this morning, took care of Mother and Willie, laid the table for dinner, took care of my room, did the general sweeping, fitted a dress in part for Aunt Sarah, made three loaves of raised bread, and now the day is well nigh gone. Perhaps you will think I have done too much, and I do feel rather weary."

-- "Those pleasant last summer days when all the day long we read, talked or walked without let or hindrance! Should we never more meet, but few mothers and daughters would have such pleasant memories. My love for you in these days I never

question. My heart goes out to you so yearningly, with such a gush of affection, that I might as well doubt my own existence. Not that I ever thought myself wanting in love, but you know the common sayings respecting adopted children. Ours is a spiritual union stronger than life or death. You are my precious, precious treasure, and waking or sleeping a mother's blessing is about you."

-- "It has been quite a privation that I cannot get out to look at the moon on the beautiful evenings we are now having, but Willie is generally troublesome about that time and I know your hands will be lifted in astonishment--I go to bed about half past-eight o'clock, and rise in the morning little past six, but some nights I do not sleep well.... Maybe I will write again by and by. Pleasant would it be to prepare the social meal for our dear family, our scattered loving circle. May Our Father guard us."

-- "Four months today I sat down at our breakfast table, knelt at our home altar, crossed the threshold of the dear spot--which had given us so precious an abiding place for one year, from the lumbery stage looked for the last time into the loving but swollen, irritated, almost fiery eyes, received my husband's last most precious kiss, and with a sad heart set my face toward the rising sun. And in all these four months of wandering I have been blessed abundantly. Rich and varied have been my joys, and I have constantly had cause for gratitude and thankfulness. Sometimes it seems that I have accomplished little or nothing, but I remember a saying of Emerson to my comfort, 'We do not know today whether we are busy or idle. In times when we thought ourselves indolent, we have afterwards discovered that much was accomplished, and much begun in us. All our days are so unprofitable when they pass, that it is wonderful where or when we ever get anything of this which we call Wisdom, or poetry or virtue. It is said all martyrdoms look mean when they are suffered...'"

-- "Today I have done what of the ironing I did not do the first of the week. I mean Willie's, mother's and mine, and washed some dresses for myself and Willie, and I feel unusually tired. I hear mother groan and I must away."

-- "Mrs. Child [author of a book Sara Jane has acquired] has taught me some sweet lessons today. Would that I had strength of nerve and power of will to mould my refractory spirit into harmony with truth and beauty as [she] would seem to indicate the possibility of doing.... I am next thing to sick, and it is owing to nervous exhaustion more than work. Under pleasant circumstances I could do twice the work that now devolves upon me with ease. A pain in my back nearly all the time, canker in my mouth now for a month, and a good part of the time the headache. You may ask why I do not go to Barnstead. Mother cannot bear to think of my leaving her. Aunt Sarah is not well. She has a diarrhea. And is it worse for me to be made sick on my mother's account than for her, when she has borne the burden of taking care of her twelve years?"

-- "In other days I may find good fruit from this summer, perhaps in another life if not soon. I have lived more from within than ever before, having not--during the summer or since--been so situated as to have anybody with whom to communicate that

which was most in my soul. Do I see a beautiful landscape? I enjoy it in silence. The glory of the sunset once in a while I am so foolish as to call attention to its splendor, but I always see good cause for repentance. A little controversy once in a while I provoke, only to find how much in love orthodox people are with brimstone.... Unitarianism leads to Universalism, and that is the sin of sins."

-- "Mother feels badly because I am writing. Even if she cannot talk to me, she does not like to have me write.... I must please her and do all in my power to bless her weary hours...."

Illness Again

One wonders why Serena had not gone east with Sara Jane. Perhaps it was simply a question of money. At the end of August she writes, "I am so hurried with business. I have fifty dollars to earn this month, and then I am going to Wolfeboro. I shall send you to Boston and myself take care of Grandma. Tell Grandma I can be a very nice nurse." In mid-September she writes that they would see her before very long. "And just think of it; if nothing happens, we shall be out of debt, and ready to begin the world anew, in a little time. Glorious prospect!"

In her next letter Serena sums up the letters that reflect Sara Jane's roller-coaster emotional and physical experience during this period. "Your letters come to us," Serena writes, "some written when all light seems to have fled from your soul, leaving the darkest midnight. Then another comes telling of rain and clouds, but the sun striving to come through and almost making a rainbow; and pretty soon we have one like today's, when hardly one speck of dark appears in a great heaven of blue. They are all dear letters, we love them, whether they tell of stormy or pleasant weather."

And she adds, "I rejoice, but almost with trembling, over the improved condition of your health. When one letter tells us you are really better than you have been for a long time, I expect another saying you are sick again. Try to keep well as you now are, and do not work so much as to destroy all the great influence of the sea-bathing..."

Two weeks later Sara Jane disabuses her of any notion that she (Sara Jane) has recovered her health: "Three letters last night, and they served to lighten the tedious burdens of a long night of suffering. Dear precious letters; surely my good angel guided the pen when they were written. I think I have been complaining of illness in most of the letters recently. I am not any better, cannot walk about any or but little to help Aunt Sarah. The difficulty is in my back. Last night I slept but very little, and this morning, I own I did long to be at home, where Reno and Mr. Ames would dress Willie and take of care of him, where I could lie in bed all the long day and be taken care of by loving hearts and careful hands. Aunt Sarah is very kind to me, but she has not yet entirely recovered. I feel the necessity of doing all I possibly can to wait on Mother, Willie and myself...."

“If I get able, I think I shall go over to see Aunt Lois [Daniels Garland] next week and let her nurse me up. So do not worry about me. To have caused you anxiety will be poor compensation for the priceless messages coming from over the prairie. I feel quite sure that I shall soon be better, so again I say don't be uneasy. My stomach does not trouble, but my mouth is very sore, so that eating is not much comfort.”

Sara Jane had left Wolfeboro at the end of September, stopping to visit several friends and relatives. From Dover she writes, “Precious letters from your pen came to me in last night's package, making me feel how rich I am in the dear child so far away. I do not think the letter received by you...gave you any idea of my suffering, and I am glad that it did not. Would that I were always able to write so cheerful as to give a comfort even when an invalid. O how do I regret those fretful letters, but it is in me to look at the dark side of life, especially when my nervous system is shattered. You know my weaknesses, perhaps even better than I, but you will forgive.”

She continues, “I have written some things about mother's cause of unhappiness and also something of going to housekeeping. I do not know what you will think of the plan. I am not able to take any step in that direction now, but perhaps I shall be better soon. At present it is all I can do to wait on myself and Willie. It is with great difficulty that I stand on my feet. I am stronger today. This morning Lissie was sick and I got breakfast...and then cleaned up the study we use for a sitting room.... My mouth too is better, and I hope that it all may be set down as so much permanent improvement.”

Housekeeping in North Wolfeboro, fall-winter 1858-59

Serena arrives in October. She had fallen in love with George Wright, back in Minneapolis, and she longs for home. “It is tiresome visiting,” she tells George. She had joined her mother in Dover three weeks earlier. They are now in Barnstead. She has found her mother unwell but better than she had been. But it is a fine thing, she says, to have a mother after going without one for five months. They intend to go around visiting relatives for the next three weeks, and then go to Uncle William Whitehouse's New Hampshire farm

Later in the fall, she and Sara Jane are renting a house in North Wolfeboro for Joann, Willie, and themselves. They will remain there all winter, until the next March (1859). Serena describes life there: “If I could tell you of the many busy days, that soon lengthen into weeks, that it has taken to get fairly settled in our home among the hills of New Hampshire, with father away and a sick and helpless Grandma to care for, you would say, your heart speaking, I forgive [for not writing]. But we are now fairly comfortable and happily at home....” They will probably spend the winter there, but if her father's designs are carried out, they will return to Minnesota in the spring. (They did not leave New England until the following autumn, though they did leave Wolfeboro for Somerville, Massachusetts in the spring of 1859.)

“We are entirely surrounded by hill and mountains, which I never tire looking at having been accustomed so many years of my life to a life on the prairies. I can look

from the window by which I now sit, and through the green spruce trees, catch a glimpse of the loveliest of lakes, Winnepesaukee. A little farther up the hill on which I live looking to the north on a clear day, we see the White Mountains standing out in clear, bold relief being only sixty miles distant.”

Charles has remained in Minneapolis through the fall to finish out his two-year term as Registrar of Deeds. It is very hard, Serene writes, to keep house without her father to carry wood and water and tend the fire.

On January, 1, 1859, Sara Jane writes her husband about valuing her blessings and making resolutions for the New Year. "Sissy says 'write a sweet letter.' Could I give to you that which is within me, I know full well you would think her injunction completely obeyed, but for that you must wait ten days longer.... I have not been so well as usual of late, but I am a little better today, and I hope to be quite well in season for your return...."

Charles Comes East

Charles finally arrives in New England in late January. Charles's *A Spiritual Autobiography* makes it clear that Sara Jane has been deeply involved in introducing him to Unitarianism: "My wife had come East a few months in advance, and her letters had been enriched with the mention of discourses she had heard from Theodore Parker, James Freeman Clark, Starr King, and E. H. Chain, the Universalist. She had also taken to reading Morton and Emerson, and her citations from sermons and talks kept me in a glow of interest and expectation. All these men had become my teachers and helpers, and now I could not only read their writings but hear their voices." Through an old friend, he met some of the Unitarians and "was drawn into a series of Sunday engagements in Unitarian pulpits."

Shortly after his arrival in North Wolfeboro, he and Sara Jane had gone to Portsmouth for a visit with their friends the Trips. From there he writes Joann and Serene, "Mrs. Ames is much as usual....Very greatly do we feel the difference between our dear home and all other places and a feeling of concern for the welfare & safety of you all will follow us every hour...."

He goes on, probably discussing groups of Free Will Baptist groups and others of similar persuasion: "I think people here in New England are too set, rigid, self-righteous and and Pharisaic for great and rapid growth either in grace or in the knowledge of the truth. I have hardly been in a circle of half a dozen where the atmosphere was not too oppressive for freedom of breath. Something of the old Puritanic stiff-neckedness characterizes everything said and done, with here and there a brave exception. But natural normal souls are painfully scarce everywhere.

"Yet on my own account why should I care? They do not suffer from my feeling of constraint and think themselves free, so the chair is not a galling one. And can I not think and act myself...just as well as though those around me were bounding with life

and freedom? Why forever be distressingly aware of their presence--as I blushinglly own I am. I mean to set both them and myself a more Christian example...." (It is likely that this letter had been written before he had a chance to make common cause with the Unitarians.)

A bit later, Charles goes to the Boston area to meet Unitarians and to encounter the stroke of luck that led to his series of Sunday Unitarian sermons. Sara Jane returns to Wolfeboro, and writes to Charles: "I am trying to be reconciled to our living apart this summer." [The separation of the family lasted only until March.]

"It just occurred to me," she writes, "that it is only necessary to bear our separation or be reconciled to it.... So in one hundred years your absence these weeks will appear but a trifle. I do not allow myself to be troubled about anything and I think I am habitually cheerful. I speak modestly for it is difficult to judge ourselves."

She goes on to report on some intellectual activity of the kind that was stirring them both. Serena had read a chapter of Luke, Lamson's Sermon on the tenets of Unitarianism (for Joann's special benefit), and a sermon from Martineau for her own, from the text, "When I was a child, I spake as a child...." Martineau's sermon spoke of the difference between childish and mature faith, and made many suggestions to those who are interested in children's religious development.... Serena is to read Dickens's *Bleak House* to her the same afternoon.

She continues in a passage that reveals the fragile state of her health: "I have discovered a serious defect in my own character and am trying to correct it. My being is merged in others. I do not know how to characterize it unless it be I do not sufficiently feel my individuality. God has given me capacities not only for enjoying but for working by myself glorious results--not depending on any human being, and consciousness of latent energy has ever abode with me, and it is quite impossible that I should thus be strengthened physically. Yet there is no need that the spirit should be made subject to the flesh. God help me. I will struggle upward. I see that my state of mind can hardly be said to be shadowed forth by what I have said of it, and as 'every woman must bear her burden,'...."

Charles is no less eager than she for uniting the family. He writes Serena: "You discover that I have not been quite well. Truth to tell, I am homesick every day, and expect to be till I can find myself in the dear circle which ought to be my family, which is my family though I see it but few times in a year.... Your mother writes that she is trying to reconcile herself to the idea of living without me another summer. I can not tell what may happen, but I have no idea of committing any such unnatural crime as protracting this way of living one day longer than is necessary."

He apparently had been approached about a position in Ohio. About this he writes, "And I see no necessity requiring me to go to Ohio to spend the summer at the expense of leaving household behind. I have indeed no idea of going there, at all.... Please assure yourselves all around that I belong with you and am hoping to make

myself manifest as a faithful 'parent' and 'housebund.' Yours by act of parliament in the way of a daddy, C.G.Ames."

Somerville

In early March, Charles takes the family to Somerville. where he had lived most of the time while engaging in his series of weekly sermons. There they boarded with Mrs. Blaisdell, a friend from their days in Tamworth Iron Works. Serena writes to George that Sara Jane is better there than she had been in Minnesota, and she hopes gaining still.

In mid-April she writes that Charles was to preach at the Somerville church for three more Sundays. Two weeks later she reports that he had been very sick with several colds that had settled in his lungs. A doctor had said he was far advanced with lung fever and was coughing blood. But a few days later he is better.

At the end of May they are still in Somerville. Serena tells George that Charles had spoken on abolition and women's rights, "thus shutting the doors of all churches and losing him the sympathy of many who had been so good to him after he came there as a stranger." He had seven more engagements, she says, after which George might hear of them "as new and valuable additions to pauperism."

George writes to Serena several times in August from various towns in Vermont. Then at the end of August she has a letter that clearly indicates he has been to see her sometime in the previous week and that they have declared their love. He starts writing to her as 'Marie.'

Sometime during their stay in Somerville, Charles chances to meet an old friend from his Baptist days who had become a Unitarian. Through him Charles is put in touch with a group in Bloomington, Illinois, who are interested in forming a liberal religious society. After he spends a month there preaching, a group of 52 people form The Society for the Study and Practice of Christianity. Charles is engaged as minister, and a contribution of \$500 arranged with the American Unitarian Association helps the local group pay him for one year.

Bloomington--No Help for Sara Jane's Illness, 1859-60

By the end of October the family--father, sickly wife, even more sickly mother-in-law, along with Serena and Willie--had arrived by train in Bloomington. Somehow, they had persuaded Joann to accompany them, and somehow she (and they) had survived the trip. Serena was entranced by the beauty of the scenery. She writes George: "If it were not for the suffering the journey caused grandma, it would be good to do again...."

They had arrived late in the evening and gone to the house they had engaged. But they found it occupied, much to their annoyance, and the occupants would not

move until the next day. Serena writes: "We all felt a little sympathy with Chick [i.e., Willie], who cried very loudly, declaring he would not stay all the time at a hotel."

Next day they have moved in, and Serena continues: "We came home Thursday, or into this house which we are trying to make a home of. Oh! such a house. But I won't talk about so bad a matter as dirt in the little moment I have to talk to you."

Throughout the fall, winter and spring, Sara Jane's afflictions continue their roller-coaster ride, more down than up, but with short periods of remission.

Within a month, Serena writes: "Mother is sick, very sick, and has been for a week. She has eaten nothing in that time scarcely, and what she has tried to take sends her into a spasm of pain in which it seems she must die. Today, after going without food so long that she was most crazy, she ate little and was taken again with the old distress. My poor mother! You can have no idea of what she suffers. She has had such sickness before, but not for a long time now." Next day: "We hope Mama is a little better. She has eaten a very little twice today, and it has not yet produced that distress."

Serena describes her routine: "My day: Up at 5:30, doing few little things, made breakfast, did the work, made ready for washer woman, mended stockings one hour, got dinner, dishes, swept floors, cleaned up parlor, combed the family heads, made grandma's bed. Put on new gown, sat down to stockings again, then supper.

"Mama and Papa talking of manifold blessings. Mama says 'We three orphans brought together from different parts of the land to form one happy family, just think of it.' Mama says whenever I leave her, she shall die. She is always so sick and Grandma sick and I am the mainstay of the family. I tell her to fear nothing, for I never will forsake her while I am needed, and besides all will be well before many years."

A few weeks later Serena reports having read Longfellow to her mother, who is not much better. "She has been so very sick many times [before], and that gives us hope for [her recovery] this time also. She lies on the lounge most all day now."

Shortly thereafter, Sara Jane is better, Serena says, and has given up wanting to die as much as previously. Soon Sara Jane is well enough to laugh. Serena describes a conversation they have: "I have always intended to do something handsome for you," she reports Sara Jane telling her, "and I have concluded what it should be, my four lots in the same city as dowry--Granite City [a hundred miles west of the Twin Cities]-- a very modest estimate of value a thousand dollars. More than property gained. Mother-in-law visits not always considered agreeable. Only as an angel visits will she ever visit at Granite City, not in bodily present."

In the mid-December, Sara Jane is still sick, and Joann "not nearly so well and suffered greatly from real and fancied ills. Chick had scarlet fever, but was not as sick as some children."

The Bloomington Society, she reports, has over 60 members, with 100 to 200 people attending services. It has an extraordinary choir, with 20 singers, a flute, violin, and bass viol. Dr. Willard and his cousin had recently visited. The doctor and Charles “got to telling funny stories,” she said. “We all being in a funny mood, have laughed until we can laugh no longer.”

On Christmas she and her parents go out to dinner at friends’ house. Several days later she writes that her mother seems “almost hopelessly sick.” She cannot eat. Later she is well enough to go for a walk, but “suffered much from nervousness.”

“Our Kate [a servant girl] we sent away today because we found her as much trouble as help. We are looking for another girl.” They want one who can learn, she tells George. “I really do not know what mama would do, in her present state of health, with me away, without someone who could, partially at least fill the place I once occupied. What do you suppose she will do?”

In the middle of February Serena, discussing with George how they will cope following their impending marriage, wonders if her mother will be well enough to allow them to leave in the coming summer, or if they can ever do so with a “sick and helpless grandmother who has grown childish and exacting?”

A week later: “I hope Mother is better, it is so slight an improvement, however, that I may be hasty in hoping so much. She has seemed so much more like herself today that she has inspired us all with new life. She said as I sat down by her to write, ‘Now you will make him think I am most well.’

“She has been talking with me about dying. She says she is almost afraid she will get well. She has had such sweet thoughts of going home, and meeting her two sisters [who had died], and father who went so long ago, to the better Land. And then she spoke of her mother who would soon perhaps go away from us, and of her [mother’s] three girls who would stand waiting to welcome her coming, with her [Joann’s] husband, mourned for so many years. She spoke of being with and watching over us who would still remain.

“You see these are thoughts born of sickness and pain. They do not trouble me at all, and they will be not unpleasant to remember when she is well again, as she will be in a few weeks.’

By the first week of March, Serena thinks her Mother might be better. Her mother says, “Tell him I am not a hard parent, and if he pleases we will foil the spirit of evil which whispers such things to him. She says you will have to be away a good deal for several years, and why cannot I be at home, when you are necessarily away, as well as any other place? She says that will answer her wants perfectly and might not suit

you badly.” But Serena tells him she will do just what he wants. She doesn’t want him to be unhappy.

At the end of March, George writes that he is coming to Bloomington. She replies yes, she wants to go to Minneapolis, but might she? “Mother will not be well,” she tells George. “If I go out for an hour even, I find all out of tune when I come home. Grandma is waiting. Mother is impatient for something. Will is teasing, and so on. I am a necessity, sure enough. They all complain though [that] I am not careful, not considerate, not always amiable and with ‘slack,’ yet I am a little girl that holds things together.’ She is trapped by love and duty.

Serena and George Marry, May 1860

Serena cleans the house getting ready for George’s arrival. She has a young man and a Dutch woman help her. On the first of April, George had written her a last letter from Oak Grove, Illinois, where he had been teaching, in which he implies that he knows they will see each other and part again.

They are married on the April 28 by her father. Then in May, after the wedding, George leaves for Minnesota. There is a suggestion in one letter that he might get a job in Bloomington, but that never materializes, and he finds employment in Minneapolis. Apparently he is doing surveying, which takes him often on trips around the state.

During the next year, with George in Minnesota and Serena in Bloomington, they wrote each other regularly. Their correspondence during this period is at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul, and I have not had an opportunity to read it. We know that in September 1860, Serena wrote to her father that she might be pregnant. Sometime in the winter early in 1861, Serena has a baby, born in Bloomington, whom they named Mary. In June, Serena and the baby make the trip to Minneapolis by boat, where Serena expects her sister-in-law Elsie, and Elsie’s son, Charley Wright, to come and help her with the housekeeping.

Since Charles, Sara Jane, Joann and Serena were all together nearly all the time during the year extending from May 1860 through the spring of 1861, we have no information on the state of Sara Jane’s health; but from the events that followed it is clear that it was deteriorating rapidly.

Sara Jane Visits Serena in Minneapolis; Charles in Turmoil. July-August 1861

In late July Sara Jane goes to visit Serena and George, staying for about a month. While she was there, Charles stayed in Bloomington with his mother-in-law, Willie, their servant girl Anne, and occasional visitors or boarders. He wrote to Sara Jane frequently, but he received little mail from Minneapolis. Charles knew that Sara Jane was ill, and in almost every letter, there he expressed hope that she would soon be well. But we must doubt if he realizes that she might soon die.

One letter closes with: "Keep good heart and spare yourself whatever will reduce your stock of life or prevent its increase." In another: "Please don't come home in a hurry if you are getting any good out of this trip. Just abandon yourself to whatever satisfaction comes of seeing old friends, and enjoy to the full the luxury of breathing Minnesota air." He goes on at length about his desire to have her do anything that will contribute to her health.

But in his letters, he shows himself in a turmoil that can't help but excite her nerves. For the entire several weeks of her absence, Charles is in an agony of indecision about his future. The Civil War had begun. Charles believes passionately that it is a great crusade--not only to save the Union but to end slavery. He sees evidence that the church will not be able to support him for another year. How is he to support an invalid mother-in-law, a child, and a sick wife? There is a possibility that he might win an appointment as chaplain of a regiment being raised in Illinois.

In letter after letter, he discusses the possibility of his leaving, covering the moral, financial and emotional aspects of his dilemma. Nothing in the future seems certain. He discusses possible living arrangements for her in Bloomington if he should go to war, and wonders about what the pay would be for a chaplain. He speculates about where the regiment might be sent. He talks of the conflict he feels between his moral sense of duty to join the war effort and his reluctance to leave home. He writes, "Never before did I value house and home life as our two years in Bloomington have taught me to value them.... I look up at the books. I look toward our bed where our child sleeps in blissful ignorance of the meaning of life; and I think of another sleeper whose pillow will be missed for many and many a night...." But next he writes that life in Bloomington has been too easy for him; service in the war will make him strong: "Except with now and then a turn of faintheartedness, I feel heroic and capable of almost anything." If he is selected as chaplain, he says, he may be leaving as soon as two or three weeks.

In another letter he explores what would happen to her if he died in his bed, or was absent and living and she was left to look after matters. "It is a school which, without our wasting grief, prepares you to get along alone, if it ever becomes necessary.... My brave wife! I know you will be master of your emotional nature; and that your faith will lift you over the wave and raise you high enough to see that I cannot and shall not go unless it is for the best. For the project proceeds not of my own will; I have not applied and do not mean to apply for the appointment. If the place seeks me, is not because it has a right to me? If it does not seek me, I shall feel as much relieved as you will; though the future will then be uncertain and dark."

Having only one letter since Sara Jane had left, it seems not to have occurred to him that the reason might be a serious deterioration in Sara Jane's condition. He seems to be avoiding thinking about how weak she is, and what may soon come. He learns from a friend who has visited in Minneapolis that his letters have added to Sara Jane's distress as she fights against her illness. He writes, "Sorry to know that you have been made sick by any letter of mine, which certainly was not intended to produce any such effect."

But he continues to send anxiety-promoting discussions about taking the chaplaincy. When at last he has a letter from Sara Jane, we can easily infer the thoughts she expresses from his reply: "My love, please re-read my last letter. Is it not a tolerably clear case--as clear as we often find in most difficult questions of duty--that I had better go, if a door opens? Whatever draft it may make on our sensibilities, shall we not both gain a higher spiritual altitude for such a sacrifice...? Let us turn our thoughts away from whatever weakens us to those higher aspects of love, duty, patriotism and religious trust, which will enable us to get the true good out of all that comes. All that comes God sends. He sends me no higher wisdom than that which says, 'Go, if called!'"

It is easy to sympathize with Charles's moral dilemma, but it is hard to excuse his deep denial about the seriousness of Sara Jane's illness, or the problems the family would face if he were to leave, with only a little hired help to take care of two very sick women. Statements about how Sara Jane can cope in his absence are wishful thinking. Despite his sermon about depending on God, he doesn't realize what he may be asking of her.

Shortly thereafter, he reports that another man is more likely to be chosen chaplain. In a masterly understatement, he writes his wife, "I suppose you will be content." The other minister was indeed chosen.

Charles's reports on conditions at home would do little to raise Sara Jane's spirits. They are living chiefly off their garden, where he works for three or four hours every morning, weeding and gathering corn, peas and beans, and sometimes squash and cucumber. The servant girl, Anne, he says, does her work better than he expected and keeps her patience under the needless lecturing she received from Joann. His mother-in-law thinks Anne a dreadful trial, although as far as Charles can see, she is prompt and cheerful in obeying requests. "Mother has borne her loneliness bravely--with less complaint than when you and Serena were almost constantly in sight. She has the headache badly today. I have not been naughty to her but once, and then only carried it so far as to beg that she would trust Anne and me to put up the berries without such incessant schooling."

A few days later he wrote that all is well at home. "Mother had a good cry because she found no mention of her in letters from the absent ones; and another cry because of the chaplaincy business."

On August 16 he writes her a love letter. "I have sometime written to you, that I was happy in having such a wife even though far removed. Daily do I know that you are giving me light and cheer and sympathy, and that, too, independent of your having me in your thoughts directly. My life will ever be more to me than it could have been, but for my knowledge of you; nor could even your removal from the earth quench or

lessen the brightness of that light which henceforth must illuminate my path, and like heaven's own grow brighter into the perfect day."

He was soon to learn whether the part about "even your removal from the earth" was true.

Sarah Jane Returns to Bloomington and Dies, September 1861

By August 30, Sara Jane is home in Bloomington, and Charles writes to Serena: "Mrs. S. J. Ames is a good ways from well these days. But she has gone down to Dr. W's to spend the day, & so keeps from having to go to bed. It is as it has been--which is sad enough.... Mrs. A. wrote a note of 3 or 4 lines yesterday and had to suffer for it, so don't wonder if her autograph is scarce up your way. Love to you."

On September 15 he reports, "She is no better, I fear. Since yester morn, she has been in a singular state for her--cataleptic, the Dr. calls. If she knows any of us, she can give no certain sign of it. Her tokens of recognition, whether of person or passing events, are as obscure and uncertain as those of a little baby. Most of the time her eyes are closed, and when open, they only stare at vacancy, so that when I hold the looking glass before her face, she does not seem to notice anything. She pays no attention to any word spoken and is not roused by any sight or sound. The Dr. thinks her conscious, but incapable of speech or any other use of her voluntary powers. Some times she lets her teeth part to take a spoonful of liquid; but generally, we press them apart with the finger.... Meanwhile she has come out very yellow with jaundice; and it is not strange that her usually full face begins to look thin as well as sallow....

"The Dr. hopes -- and I do some -- that she may come out of this state better than she went into it; and that after this overflow of bilious matter has ceased, she will have a better digestion. But her face and features give no promising sign, and she is so much reduced that her future must be regarded with sad doubts.

"The dark matter thrown up for several days--which Drs. Dunn & Willard both regard as half-digested blood which has oozed into the stomach through its own coatings--has not appeared today; perhaps because she has not strength to vomit; every attempt only ending in a hiccup. Dr. D. hoped to bring her out of this spell by stimulants, and we have given her wine in small quantities once an hour of late, but with no other effect than to cause her to show signs of aversion and disgust by scowling and contractions of face.

"Dr. W. or wife or both let us see their interest every night and morning, and the people are all so kind that it almost makes me weep. Mr. Norton, I think, gives her up to die; and mother can hardly eat or sleep. I am calm and hopeful; but I cannot look on her in present sad and wretched state without feeling that any change except to a state of roused conscious suffering will be welcome relief. I cannot will to have her torture protracted; but I still expect to see her come back to me."

The letter continues the next day, September 16: "A sad night, my daughter! Many signs have indicated that for twelve or fifteen hours my wife was nearing the boundaries of the other country. Dr. Dunn said to me at 8 1/2 last evening, he must regard her case as beyond the reach of hope. At my request he selected Dr. Stennert as a consulting physician. They agree about treatment: but Dr. S. is more hopeful. Mrs. Willard and Mrs. Barber were here all night. Her symptoms were more favorable--or rather she seemed to rest so quietly--that at 12 I went to bed, and was called up at five when they thought she was returning to consciousness, as she groaned several times & roused up a little, looking wildly about.

"But she gives no more positive signs of any intelligence than before--seems in a dreamy state, or as if her faculties were collapsing."

At 11 am, he adds: "I can only say before closing my letter that there is no particular change unless it be that she breathes a little shorter. She cannot be conscious of much suffering; and though one smile of recognition or one farewell word or kiss would be worth a world, I cannot wish her to revive only to making her closing hour one of mortal agony. Rather let her pass from a state of unconsciousness, which seems like the sleep of a child, to the Great Awakening--the blessings of the life immortal. Yours in tears but in peace. Papa."

Later that day, he writes again: "O my child! How can I write it! The thing we have so long and so greatly feared at last has come upon us. I trust my previous letters have partly prepared your mind for the melancholy news; though I know that no preparation can make it other than an overwhelming wave of sorrow to your heart, as it is to mine who have watched and waited so many troubled days and nights.

"This afternoon (Monday) at 3:20 your mother and my wife passed away from us to that higher sphere for which the discipline of duty and sorrow had so long been fitting her. She continued to the last in the state of lethargy described in the letter of yesterday and this morning, so that as I knelt by her dying bed and held her hand in mine, I watched in vain for one flash of recognition, one response to my longing for one word, or look, or pressure of the hand. To me her death will always date back to the time where she passed under the cloud and into the shadows of the Valley, no more to return.....

"I send you my sad good night, and mourn that I must write words which will break your heart. But O let us thank God that our unspeakable loss is surpassing gain to her, and that 'there is rest for the weary.' Your poor Papa."

"The Whole Form a Majesty of Repose"

The next day, Charles writes again: "I sit in the back parlor alone, while for the first time in many hours the ebb and flow of neighbors and friends, full of sorrow and sympathy and kindly offers of service, has ceased. Mother is in the middle chamber, suffering from chills and fever. Anne has dragged the cushions of a lounge into

mother's bedroom & stretches on the floor, while Henry is out to carry to the Pantagraph a notice of the death and coming funeral, and to make sure that Mr. Lesser and another will come to sit up tonight in this same back parlor....

"I can hardly bear to say that the dear body is in a coffin. You must not think of a large hideous black box, but a cheerful looking casement covered with clean white merino & prettily trimmed with a silver border, gimp, and the top-board or roof relined around with a neat silk fringe--all white, and the inside is lined with the same merino, except that white silk is used at the wider end.

"My child, you need not shudder to look within. No sweeter face was ever moulded in clay. There sleeps the earth-form, the perfect picture of its former self when the truant spirit-queen was in her best moods and her brightest health, except that the feature are cut in marble. The clear white hands are folded across the breast, a wreath of heliotrope turned in the lace cuffs of her undersleeves encircling each wrist, and the fingers of the left hand clasp a nosegay, while a layer of flowers and geraniums rests upon the quiet breast. Flowers too are in her hair, which curl as she used to wear it, and she is dressed that purple Cerase dress which pleased her so well. Vases of flowers are placed in head and foot, and later Mr. Willard has set the stand with books upon it near her head.

"The whole form expressed a majesty of repose, and the countenance particularly gives an idea of satisfaction--contentment--and even of triumph--such as I should expect to see her spirit wear if I could look behind the veil where she will 'walk in soft white light on the hills of God,' and 'talk with grateful tongue of storm & peril past....'

"I love to dwell upon it, and to go and look, and look again. Nothing make me feel so certain that death has made her immortal; nothing so completely soothes and tranquilizes my own stricken and bleeding heart--as to gaze on that beautiful shadow of a glorious substance. Mother's grief was more effectually subdued when we carried the body to her bedside and let her look at the sweet face than by any words of consolation which could be uttered. Many friends have come in to weep, and gone away comforted by the same silent messages of the open coffin, which seems to rebuke our grief as needless and misdirected....

"The house during much of today has been full of company--dear friends they seemed, full of considerate sympathy--my burden of little duties was great, that so many were ready to help. I wrote twelve letters in the forenoon, beside two the night previous--many of them being merely brief notes, but several of some length. Then I was present to witness the results of a postmortem examination, of which I will hereafter write you.

"Then Kusey Fell came with a carriage to take me to the cemetery where with great difficulty I at last brought myself to decide on a burial spot--a sweet grassy slope, under a group of trees, yet visited by the sun during a part of the day--a place where

birds will sing and come to drink water from the vase which she wished have placed there....

“An hour or two I went alone to the grove in the afternoon; and there in the blessed solitude the angels strengthened me to partake of the holy sacrament of sorrow and to sip it though it were the very wine of God's Kingdom. I do not think the death of my wife will ever again awaken grief, as the world understands that word, after those sacred moments in which

I saw through life and death
Through good & ill,
And saw through my own soul
The marvel of the everlasting will.
Before me lay, an open scroll....

“And the divine meaning of it has been unfolded to me today with such clearness that I found myself just about to fall on my knees with uplifted hands in awe and thanksgiving toward the wonder-working God, who as I know has sent an angel to walk with me through all these years, and to be to me as his Messiah and my Savior. If my feet ever stand on the summits of the celestial life, if my voice ever bears the melodies of heaven, if my spirit ever mingles with the company of just men made perfect, I know it will be through the rich grace of God shown me in the gift of such a wife. I feel as if her life had been like a crucifixion for my sake, and I open my eyes in sad astonishment to see it so clearly revealed that I have been so unworthy a husband; and that she has been bruising her sensitive and delicate spirit against my coarser and grosser nature in a process which has refined and exalted me just enough to let me now comprehend that process itself; and has then gone to leave me to the guidance of such wisdom as this experience has furnished.

“I have lived a life-true (or through) in the past thirty-six hours.... I went with Charlie to the grave [site] southwest of the city, with a troubled, bursting heart. When I could bring myself to face and weigh the event, I felt that all the value of my life and of everything in the world had depended upon its relation to her, and that now she was gone the earth itself and all its affairs were but as a trifle--a paltry ball....

“I grew calm, & hoped that time would change my feeling--surely a night's sleep would let me recover a little. This early dawn found Charlie and his father weeping in each other's arms, and repeating the Lord's prayer in a tone of sorrowful supplication.

“The work which God has begun in me so largely through her precious influence must go on till the day of perfection. I must walk through to the flames of the furnace--I must pass through the billows. I must, as her spirit and her example have now fully taught me, abandon myself and submit to suffering. Over the ‘few things’ left to me--over my boy and my mother and my own poor heart. I must be faithful to the end, which is not so far distant after all. And as Charlie says, I shall meet her in the gates of heaven.”

Findings of the Autopsy

Before she died, Sara Jane, suspecting that the doctors had never accurately diagnosed her illness, asked her physician, Dr. Willard, to carry out an autopsy. Shortly after her death, he does so, assisted by two other doctors. Charles attends the autopsy and writes to Serena, "We now may be sure that no physician ever grasped rightly at the seat of her disease."

The finding was that she had had, for a long time, a diseased pancreas. The pancreas produces an alkaline fluid containing enzymes that offset the acidity of the gastric juices in the stomach. The lack of flow from the pancreas was the cause of the long-term stomach pains from which Sara Jane suffered.

"No other sign of disease was found," Charles writes, "and what was found, they say, would not probably have proved fatal, had not the nervous system been involved and deranged by over-taxation. She might have lived by carefulness, but would always have been in danger from exertion of body or mind."

The Funeral, September 20, 1861

The day before the funeral, Charles writes to Serena: "Tomorrow--Thursday--at three o'clock, H. J. Eddy will read and pray at the house for dear mother's sake, and then at half past three, Mr. Reed of Peoria will preach at the Hall. They will sing...a voluntary piece 'Sweet is the scene when Christians die.' Then out of your Hymn Book, the 352d, 404th and 409th--the last at the grave to the tune of 'Scotland.'

"For my own part, I would have only a quiet and select company of friends at the house at sunset, but something is due--not to the vulgar public--but to the great number of persons, old and young, who knew and respected her, and especially to our congregation, who all regarded her with a living affection and are so forward to testify it by their present acts of kindness."

The day after the funeral, he writes: "Yesterday took place the cheerful funeral solemnities. The coffin had been finally closed in the morning. At 3 o'clock, the parlors were filled with ladies, the men in attendance remaining outside for the most part. First, Mr. Eddy gave out the 365th Hymn,
Come to the Lord of Peace,
From shadows come away.
Where all the sounds of weeping cease
And storms no more have sway.

Then he read some selections from scripture, made some remarks on the right use of such afflictions, commended the Christian life and virtues of Mrs. Ames, and offered a brief prayer.

We all [then] walked to the Hall...."

The hall was full, Charles says, mostly women.... Mr. Reed read a text, "and he spoke so beautifully, tenderly, & appropriately, that it almost seemed as if his soothing and blessed words were inspired by her own presence--they were so like what she would have wished. Near the close he paid her a touching and just personal tribute, to which I know many hearts responded."

Next came the procession of 20 carriages to the cemetery. "I could not help rejoicing as we rode through the streets that there could be so striking a public testimony against the ghastly and gloomy views of death which are so common."

Charles and a few others threw earth on the grave, and some of the girls laid flowers on it.
"It was now sunset, the very hour she had chosen for her burial...."

END

(An appendix on the Daniels' family history follows.)

Appendix

History of the Daniels Family

Sara Jane's father was John Daniels. He was born 30 November 1795, probably in Barnstead NH, as that's where his parents lived. On 24 September 1820 he married Mary Whitehouse of Rochester NH and with her had three children: Maria G., John Whitehouse, and Mary Ann. He became a widower on 7 December 1826. Exactly a year later, he married his first wife's sister Joann. He died at Barnstead 9 Oct. 1830 (of typhus fever as recorded by his son John Whitehouse Daniels in his Record of the Daniels Family). At that time Sara Jane was just two years old, Maria G. was 9 1/2, John Whitehouse 7 1/2, and Mary Ann 4 1/2.

John had been married to Joann Whitehouse just less than 3 years. According to Charles Gordon Ames, he was a storekeeper. Court records indicate that he had a license to sell spirituous liquors. He served in the militia for a little while in 1812 in defense of Portsmouth, for which Joann was later able to get a warrant for some land in Minnesota.

John's estate inventory included:

Sundry articles: incl .a gallery pew in the Union Meeting House in Barnstead, a scaffold of hay, wheat and oat straw, a saddle and martingale, a couple of pistols etc.

Household furniture: 2 beds and 2 bedsteads, some other furniture, various cooking and household utensils, a couple of spinning wheels

Livestock: 1 cow, 1 hog and 3 sheep. (No horses!)

Farming utensils: an ox yolk, pitch forks, wheel barrow, etc.

Morton Wiggins in *A History of Barrington, N.H.* (1966) reveals: "The pioneer of the Daniels family of South Barrington was Peletiah Daniels (25 May 1734-5 March 1818), who seems to have come to Barrington shortly after the Indian War. He built a homestead near the old McDaniel Garrison, which later became known as the Daniels Garrison..... Daniel's son Isaac (9 May 1782-26 October 1851) married Rebecca Chapman, 23 February 1809."

Peletiah married Abigail, whose maiden name is not recorded. With her he had seven children, four girls and three boys, Peletiah, Jr., our ancestor, being the eldest boy and Isaac the youngest. The elder Peletiah apparently did well; the inventory of his estate at his death in 1818 shows a total value of \$7200. He left his son Peletiah, Jr., John's father, a tract of land in Barnstead, where the younger Peletiah then lived, of approximately 60 acres, valued at \$900. He provided land to another son in Barnstead worth \$720, gave each of his three married daughters \$100, and required his son Isaac, to whom he left his homestead, to provide a good maintenance to an unmarried daughter and also a granddaughter, whom he had apparently taken responsibility for, until these young women married. The unmarried daughter Sarah never married and lived to a ripe old age, according to the Barnstead Cemetery record. (Or is it Barrington?)

Peletiah signed an Association Test requested by the Committee of Safety of the Colony of New Hampshire in April 1776, under which the signers pledged to support the efforts of the United Colonies against the hostile actions of the British fleet and armies. All those who did not sign were to be disarmed by the Committee of Safety. Peletiah's name also appears on a revolutionary war memorial in the Barrington Cemetery, as reported by the Barrington Historical Society, which compiled records of the stones in the cemetery. However, it appears from another compilation of cemetery stones that Peletiah was buried in Barnstead, as was his wife Abigail, his daughters Ruth Langley and Sarah Daniels, and his son Isaac and Isaac's wife Rebecca.

On June 12, 1775, Peletiah, Abigail and Bridget Demerit, widow, sold lots in Rochester, "the same lots drawn originally to the right of John Williams and came from him to us to have and to hold the said granted and bargained premise...." (See Land Records, Strafford County, NH.) We can guess from this record that Bridget may have been Abigail's mother, and that Williams may have been Bridget's first husband, perhaps Abigail's father.

So far I have found little record of Peletiah II except his wife's name, Sally Bickford, and his children, Abigail, Sally, John, and Lois. Abigail married the Rev. David Garland. If he is the same man buried in Barnstead, he was pastor of the 2nd Free Will Baptist Church there. Lois married Samuel Garland. These latter Garlands had one son, Calvin, and five grandchildren. Samuel's relationship to his brother-in-law David, if any, is not revealed in our records. I do not know what happened to Sally.

End of Appendix