ADA CLARE, QUEEN OF BOHEMIA:
HER LIFE AND TIMES

GLORIA RUDMAN GOLDBLATT

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To my parents, Morris and Julia Rudman,
and my husband, Samuel Goldblatt
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the 35 years I have worked on researching and writing this book, I have had support and encouragement from many. Otherwise I would have given up long ago. First of all I am thankful to have Professor Lisa Kahaleole Hall as current editor of this book. She has infinite patience and amazing skill plus being a wonderful person. Professor Lynn C. Bloom, teacher and friend of many years, critiqued my earliest work on Ada Clare. Professor Edward Whitley, co-director with Rob Weidman of The Vault at Pfaff's, Lehigh University’s digital archive of America’s first Bohemia, is a friend who has always believed that this Ada Clare biography merited publication and has done everything to make it happen. I never could have imagined as I first typed this book on a typewriter (in the days of no personal computers or internet) that someday my book would be an e-book in a digital historical archive!

Special thanks to Professor Scott Gordon, and everyone at the Lehigh University Press. The late Professor John G. Doyle shared research over many years and also critiqued my manuscript. Professor S. Frederick Starr and Professor Holly Blake also shared research, read early chapters of my book and gave me invaluable advice. Jan Seidler Ramirez welcomed my information about Ada Clare for the exhibition about Bohemians and Greenwich Village at the Museum of the City of New York, and made efforts to get the book published. Leonard Mogel read the first chapter and saw a potential book. My thanks to the late Joyce Tracy, whose advice and assistance set me on the right path when I began my research at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. Thanks to Luisa Cetti, author and scholar of Milan, Italy, for encouragement and sharing her writing about Ada Clare’s novel Only a Woman’s Heart.

From South Carolina, Harlan Greene gave me a crash course on Charleston writers and encouraged my work on Ada Clare from the first time I walked into the South Carolina Historical Society. Alex Moore and Stephen Hoffius added patience and kindness to editing expertise. The late local historian John Boineau of Megget, South Carolina, took me to McElhenney Flats in the Low Country outside Charleston, the location of Ada Clare’s family plantation. My thanks to the late Dr. Fraser Wilson, Ada’s collateral relative, for family information and for the hospitality he and his wife shared with me in their beautiful Charleston home that held portraits of some of Ada’s family. Thanks also for the hospitality and encouragement of Newell and Fela Cox, and Professor Gerald and Arline Polinsky.

The late Robert Young, Jr. of Sacramento was the great-grandson of Ada’s dearest friends William and Elizabeth Winter. He shared much valuable information with me about their relationships with Ada.

My gratitude to the late Professor Daniel McKeithan, Professor Paul Gaston, the late Vera Brodsky Lawrence, Deborah Pollack, Professor Jerome Loving, Hugh Wilson, the late Robert Offergeld, Terry Miller, Jon Tandler, and Ray Reynolds. Last but not least, I am grateful for the late Albert Parry, author of the book Garrets and Pretenders that included the first extensive writing about Ada Clare. His friendship and encouragement over many years was a special gift.

I am grateful for the assistance and courtesy of many librarians who aided my research and helped with other matters over many years. These include librarians at the American Antiquarian Society, the Bancroft Library, the South Carolina Historical Society, the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina, the Perkins Library at Duke University, the Library of Congress, Columbia University, the University of Texas, the Harvard Theater Library, Southern Illinois University, the Pennsylvania Historical Society, the University of Nebraska, the Missouri Historical Society, and Washington University in St. Louis.

Finally I thank family members who have always been there: my late husband Sam Goldblatt, my son Lewis Steven Goldblatt, my brother Professor Stephen Rudman, my granddaughter Jennifer Molinoff and my cousins Erika Gottfried and Marjorie Berg.
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INTRODUCTION

Ada Clare (1834-1874), American journalist, actress, and feminist Bohemian was born into a Southern elite family of slaveholding cotton planters and social arbiters. Though educated to become an upper-class lady, exemplary wife and respectable mother in Charleston, South Carolina, she dared to run away to New York City where she lived far outside the boundaries of those expectations. In mid-nineteenth century America other women like her may have questioned their limited range of life options, but few ventured out of their “woman’s sphere” to seek equality with men in careers and intimate relationships. Ada was a true forerunner of the “New Woman” who would follow her in large numbers decades later.

Ada Clare faced many obstacles as she swam against the tide of her era’s conventional expectations for women but there were critically important circumstances in her favor that enabled Ada to establish a life of her own. She was raised in a home that allowed her a fine education, access to books, and the opportunity to develop her writing talent through publishing her first works in a local literary magazine. A combination of a family inheritance and her own determination made it possible for her to leave her aristocratic Southern family and community in Charleston, South Carolina, and sustain herself in New York City. And perhaps most importantly, as she worked to establish a career as a writer and actress, she found a support group of other writers and artists, also rebels, who had come to New York looking for the stimulation of new ideas, and a way of life and work suited to their free-wheeling personalities.

These rebels called themselves Bohemians, and Pfaff’s beer cellar in New York’s Greenwich Village was their headquarters. They were the first Americans to emulate the impoverished but lighthearted, talented French writers and artists who lived on the Left Bank in Paris written about by Henri Murger in his Scenes de la Vie de Boheme. And though their artistic movement was in full bloom for only a few short years, their influence still lives on.

Through both her wit and skill at making connections, Ada rose to the heights of Bohemian Society, ruling over the lively group often gathered around a long table in the famous beer cellar alongside brilliant editor Henry Clapp, Jr. They acclaimed her as “The Queen of Bohemia” and together they drank beer, enjoyed Herr Pfaff’s delicious food, smoked, and enlivened themselves with songs, stories, verse contests, readings of their own work, and talk of the latest books and plays.

Like Ada, some of them were forerunners of the future--in this case anticipating 1960s America by a hundred years -- living in an urban commune in a brownstone house they called “The Unitary Home,” practicing “Free Love,” and experimenting with drugs. This collection of witty and experimental personalities at Pfaff’s produced the avant-garde weekly literary paper Saturday Press, (First Series: 1858-1860), for which Ada began to write a weekly column, “Thoughts and Things.”

Ada was lucky that the Press developed many new writers. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, John Burroughs, Edmund C. Stedman, and William Dean Howells saw some of their first works published in the First Series of the Saturday Press, and subsequently became well-known. In the brief Second Series of the Press from 1865 to 1866, Bret Harte and Mark Twain, then known as Western writers, began to make their first significant appearance on the Eastern literary scene in advance of their fame. And from a present-day perspective, one of the best things the Pfaff’s Circle of Bohemians and the Press did was to give emotional and editorial support to Walt Whitman, their one genius. One of the most colorful Bohemians was their only war hero, Fitz-James O’Brien, who died fighting for the Union in the Civil War. He was heir to Edgar Allen Poe as a writer of fantastic tales, and those tales and O’Brien are receiving new attention today. In those days it was unusual for women to join the men in a beer cellar, but there were gutsy, interesting, and talented women among the Bohemians and Ada was at their center.

Ada Clare, whose writing is only gradually being re-discovered and appreciated today, was a celebrity in her own day. Her physical beauty and witty writing were constantly reported on, though not always kindly, wherever she did and wherever she went. Most of the time, her colorful exciting life was centered in New York City but she also wrote about visits to Paris during the hectic Second Empire; the Far West’s cultural capital, San Francisco, and its frontier outpost Virginia City; as well as Hawaii, Havana, and Central America. Whether Ada was covering a murder trial in a New York courtroom, appearing in the audience of
the opera in Havana, riding a spirited horse to Kilauea volcano in Hawaii, or simply walking down a New York street, she always attracted interest.

At times she sought attention, but later in life wrote a friend, “You do not know how sick I am of the petty notoriety which is not fame, nor how tired I am of exciting that curiosity which is not interest.” A key source of that notoriety was Ada’s front-page descriptions in the *New York Atlas* of her suffering when her lover, Louis Moreau Gottschalk rejected her. The famous American musician and composer was as well-known for being a Casanova as for concertizing, and their love affair left her with a tragic obsession for him that tormented her for the majority of her life. Gossip named him the father of her son, Aubrey, born out of wedlock.

Today she merits interest and rediscovery for many reasons beyond her contemporary notoriety. Her newspaper columns in the *Saturday Press*, and later *The New York Leader*, and *The Golden Era* in San Francisco are worth reading as a witty illumination of the cultural scene in mid-nineteenth century America. Her writing about women’s issues is strikingly modern, written from the perspective of one who courageously lived her life according to her own, rather than society’s expectations.

Always controversial, Ada was at different times in her life a spoiled Southern belle, a *femme fatale* (with at least one man a suicide for hopeless love of her), an acclaimed “literary lady”, and an unmarried mother who openly acknowledged her son and raised him. In her later years, (1868-1874) Ada was a devoted wife to her husband, J. Franklin Noyes, an actor-manager with whom she performed in Southern stock companies.

Ada was an heiress who was often short of cash, an aristocrat who preferred the company of Bohemians and socialists, a fine drama critic who was unsuccessful at becoming a major actress, and a failed novelist who did excellent literary reviewing. She was also a loyal friend who treated her friends like family, and a deadly enemy to anyone who disapproved of her life and work. Time and again she fought her critics, declaring that she was not immoral just because she varied from “inflexible standards,” and had “a frankness of speech and manners with men, a talent to dress becomingly, a good appetite, a cheerful expression, an acquaintance with rouge, an aversion to lying, and the ability to think for [her]self!”

Ada Clare’s personal life story is as interesting as the story of the times she lived in. It is the story of a woman who seized her opportunity to become autonomous, and struggled thereafter to live life on her own terms, bravely playing the cards that Fate dealt her.
CHAPTER 1: ADA AGNES MCELHENNEY
A SOUTHERN LADY

Though Ada Clare’s early life in South Carolina was far removed from the noisy crowds of New York City surging up and down Broadway above Pfaff’s Beer Cellar, perhaps it is not surprising that she came to rule her lively subjects as the Queen of Bohemia. Ada Clare, neé Ada Agnes Jane McElhenney, was by birth, if not a queen, at least a member of the privileged class of South Carolina cotton planters, who considered themselves the elite of their time and place. As the daughter of James McElhenney, a lawyer and prosperous cotton planter, and Joanna Wilson McElhenney, daughter of even wealthier planter Hugh Wilson, Ada had every social and financial advantage. Some of her ancestors were among the earliest European arrivals to Charleston and its surrounding lowcountry of humid Sea Islands with their marshes and slow-moving creeks bordered by oaks bearded with Spanish moss; later ancestors settled the pine-wooded hills of the Upcountry. By 1834, when Ada was born, all their descendants were financially prosperous, and a few were politically powerful.

Through her father’s mother, Susannah Wilkinson McElhenney, Ada was descended from the English settlers who made their first permanent community in 1685, on the land between the Ashley and Cooper Rivers on the Atlantic coast. They named their colony Charleston in honor of King Charles II, who had bestowed the land on some nobles loyal to his cause. Charlestonians would later describe the pre-eminence of their location as where “the Ashley and Cooper Rivers meet at Charleston to form the Atlantic Ocean!”

One of Ada’s Wilkinson ancestors married Joseph Morton, son of Landgrave Joseph Morton, an early governor, and holder of one of the immense parcels of land given to the supporters of King of England by the original Lord Proprietors of the colony. The Lord Proprietors also offered smaller parcels of free or very inexpensive land to encourage settlers to come and take the risks in settling this wild new place. The settlement was founded for financial profit, but religious tolerance existed as a by-product of the investors’ desire to attract as many new settlers as possible. Thus a varied group of Europeans arrived to settle South Carolina, some of whom came as much for religious freedom as for business opportunity— including French Huguenots, Sephardic Jews, and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians.

Ada’s father’s family, the McElhenneys, were among the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians who settled on the South Carolina Upcountry frontier after a lengthy odyssey in search of religious freedom and better living conditions that began when they had an opportunity to leave Scotland to be settled in Ulster by English authorities attempting to control the Irish rebellions against English rule. Though at first these settlers had prospered in Ireland, eventually unfavorable political conditions and other factors caused them to migrate to America early in the eighteenth century. As they moved along the frontier south from Pennsylvania, the defeat of Braddock and the French-Indian war made each new settlement more and more unsafe for them. Some of the group ended up in South Carolina, but they did not settle in the Lowcountry around Charleston that had already become prosperous and urbane. Instead the newcomers settled the hilly lands above the fall line; living there was still primitive, but offered much opportunity for growth.

It took several generations for the Charlestonians to prosper after surviving Indian resistance, hurricanes, outbreaks of fever, fire, and even pirates: it took only one generation for the Upcountry settlers managed to make a home on the frontier. Ada’s McElhenney ancestors settled in the Waxhaw district where the Waxhaw Presbyterian Church served as a rallying place for Americans in the Revolutionary cause. Soon, aided by growth of their settlements, their strong showing in helping to defeat the British in the Revolution, and the emergence of powerful political leaders, the Upcountry began to rival the Lowcountry in political power. By the late 1700s, the capitol of South Carolina was moved from Charleston to Columbia. President Andrew Jackson was born in the Upcountry, but the most influential Upcountry leader to defend Southern interests on the national level was statesman John C. Calhoun, a relative by marriage of Ada’s family.
Before the Upcountry was settled, Charleston and the nearby Lowcountry of Sea Islands, where the wealthy planters had their plantations, had become the largest and wealthiest settlement in the colonies south of Philadelphia, as well as a brilliant social and cultural center. Charleston’s fine harbor soon made it an important seaport where the early Lowcountry crops of rice and indigo were shipped out. Before the Revolutionary War, Charleston had six times more trade with England than any other Colonial port, and even after the Revolution, English taste strongly influenced Charleston culturally.  

There was tremendous economic and social change along with increasing territorial, economic, and social expansion after the Revolutionary War as Americans struggled to build a new country. Ada Clare’s life spanned a particularly tumultuous time; in the decade of her birth, the population of the United States increased by a third from 12,866,020 in 1830 to 17,069,453 in 1840. The native population boom of the states was accompanied by rising immigration, and the 1830s and 1840s witnessed a wave of mostly German and Irish-Catholic immigrants with a concomitant social upheaval. Great social reform movements were developing in the years after Ada Clare was born. Labor organizing helped shape antebellum America along with varied and widespread efforts by male and female reformers to eradicate social evils such as slavery, alcoholism in the form of the “demon rum,” and the mistreatment of the mentally ill, among many other significant issues. Historian Sara Evans has labeled this time as the “Age of Associations.” The early days of organizing the women’s movement for suffrage and other rights culminated with the first women’s rights convention convened by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton at Seneca Falls, New York in 1848. These reformers’ discussions about the rights of women in particular would strongly influence Ada Clare’s life and writing.  

Due to the efforts of leading reformers such as Horace Mann and Henry Barnard, growing numbers received at least a basic public school education throughout the North; in the South, however, even basic education was mostly reserved for the elite and was taken care of through arrangements with tutors, or private schools like those run by the Misses Bates that Ada Clare would attend. This expanded newly-educated and literate population took advantage of the print technology revolution that ushered in an enormous expansion of the availability of the printed word, and the 1830s witnessed rapid growth of newspapers, magazines, and books. The number of newspapers alone soared from 376 in 1810 to over 1200 in 1835. This development was highly significant for Ada Clare’s life and her 1850s writing career was supported by an even bigger subsequent expansion of the popular press and a renaissance in American literature.  

When Ada Clare was born in July of 1834, she was not far removed in time from the hard lives of her pioneering ancestors, but her life would be vastly different from theirs. Her life would be shaped by these enormous changes taking place in America.  

A Lowcountry Childhood  

The first daughter of James and Joanna Wilson McElhenney, Ada Clare made her first appearance on the world’s stage when she was born in the comfort and elegance of her family’s Charleston townhouse at the corner of Spring and Rutledge streets. She was given the name Ada, probably as a shortened version of the name Adelaide in honor of Adelaide Wilson Hanahan, Joanna’s youngest and favorite sibling among her eight brothers and sisters.  

The McElhenneyes were in town during that July because like other Lowcountry planters they had a dual residence pattern, living from May until November in Charleston during the “sickly season” when all the planters left the terrible heat of their swampy Lowcountry plantations that was a breeding place for mosquitoes carrying malaria, yellow fever, and other maladies. As Alexander Moore has written:

By the early nineteenth century the Lowcountry’s political economy had produced a culture that was modeled on a metropolis, Charleston, and a hinterland, where plantations were located. This was the place where African and African-American slaves labored to grow staple crops for export. The fruits of these exports --deerskins, indigo, and rice in the eighteenth century and rice and sea island cotton in the nineteenth -- provided the planters’ great wealth that was spent on their social life, dwelling places, and cultural activities in Charleston, and sometimes travel to Northern resorts and Europe. The
diseases and debilitating climates drove those who would avoid the swamps and marshes first into Charleston and the surrounding barrier islands for respite and then further afield. Summer resort towns in the ‘pine lands’, mountain retreats like Greenville, South Carolina, and other small mountain towns were an alternative to the hot, humid Lowcountry. The pattern of seasonal escape began early in the Lowcountry, and continued for some families even today.\textsuperscript{15}

When living in Charleston, the planters were not seen as country people staying in the city. The planters and wealthy merchants made up the elite who dominated polite society, and conspicuously displayed their wealth and power through their elegant homes and churches, their fine resident theater company, concerts, literary societies, and other cultural activities. They had libraries in their homes, they supported the Charleston Library Society, one of the oldest in the nation, and they patronized the many fine bookstores that stocked books and journals of Southern interest as well as publications from New York, Boston, and London.

Except for visits to Charleston in late January for a busy social season, social life was quieter the rest of the year when the McElhenneys returned to their Lowcountry plantation on slow-moving, marshy Toogoodoo Creek near the town of Adam’s Run about 35 miles south of Charleston. Here, even more than in Charleston, Ada was surrounded by neighbors who were also her relatives. The very closest were Ada’s widowed Aunt Emily McElhenney Hayne and her son, Paul Hamilton Hayne, who would become well known in later years as a poet and man of letters. Ada and her cousin Paul, four years her senior, were raised as he recalled, “like brother and sister, literally under the same roof”\textsuperscript{16} at various times when they were growing up. In later life she remembered that he comforted her when she was very young when her pet dove died, and that she cried when he went away to school.\textsuperscript{17} He would grow to become a mentor for her poetry and her first literary efforts.

Even her Aunt Emily had tried her hand at poetry, writing a long poem describing the beauties of Toogoodoo in a letter to her husband, a naval officer at Pensacola who died of yellow fever shortly after Paul was born.\textsuperscript{18} Ada’s father James and her Aunt Emily shared the Toogoodoo plantation they inherited from their mother Susannah Wilkinson McElhenney after she died in 1836, and he also inherited the responsibility, shared with the Hayne family, of looking after the best interests of his widowed sister and her son.

Other relatives constantly in touch and visiting often were Joanna’s parents Hugh and Anne Jenkins Wilson, Joanna’s eight brothers and sisters and their children, and other relatives who were also planters on the neighboring sea islands: John’s Island, Wadmalaw, and Edisto. Their family names marked the smaller islands, creeks, and inlets that were part of Ada’s everyday surroundings in the Lowcountry. Many family members belonged to the same Presbyterian churches on the islands and in Charleston, and some of the cousins even married sooner or later, merging their lives and their lands.

The sole exception to this neighbor-and-family marriage pattern had been the marriage between Ada’s paternal grandparents, James McElhenney, Senior, from the Upcountry, and Lowcountry heiress, Susannah Wilkinson in 1800. He was a widower and prominent Presbyterian minister who came to serve the Wiltown Presbyterian Church in St. Paul’s Parish near Adam’s Run where he met and married Susannah Wilkinson, a regular churchgoer who also helped financially to support her congregation’s projects. She was the widow of her own first cousin Francis Wilkinson, and already had a daughter named Susannah.

After James and Susannah married, the family returned to the Upcountry, where he was minister at the Old Stone Church of Oconee in the Pendleton District. Their children, Ada’s father James and his sister Emily, were born and raised there. After James McElhenney Sr.’s death at 44 in 1812, Susannah Wilkinson McElhenney took most of her children back to Charleston. But her daughter Susannah Wilkinson remained Upcountry where she married into the politically powerful Pickens family. Her father-in-law was Andrew Pickens, noted Revolutionary War general who later became a Congressman. Susannah Wilkinson Pickens’ daughter Susannah married into John Calhoun’s family; her son, Francis Wilkinson Pickens, a wealthy planter, was a powerful politician serving in Congress, and later as Minister to Russia from 1858-1860. He would become Civil War governor of South Carolina. Thus Ada was related by both blood and marriage to many historic and powerful families of South Carolina.
There were especially close ties to the Upcountry: her family often made long visits to her cousin Francis Wilkinson Pickens’ baronial plantation Edgewood in the Edgefield District, where he was known for his lavish hospitality and distinguished guests. They also visited McElhenney kinfolk equal in offering hospitality when they traveled away to the uplands at times during summer to escape the lowland heat.

Social life in South Carolina was influenced by the fact that plantations and towns were geographically scattered. There was a brilliant Charleston social season starting at the end of January: balls, theater, the Philharmonic concerts, and the racing season with its Jockey Ball provided excitement. But in the country, churchgoing and visits from family and friends, when visitors might stay for weeks, provided most of the social life. Married women were especially tied to the plantation with supervising their households and frequent pregnancies, but men got away to Charleston for business with their banks, lawyers, and cotton factors, or to attend political meetings or report for muster.

However, at certain times of the year very affluent planters like the McElhenneys and the Wilsons did travel by steamer as far as New York for shopping, socializing, and attending cultural events; Saratoga Springs and Newport for the summer social season; and even to Europe. Higher education drew sons of planters away from the South, too. Ada’s Wilson uncles attended Yale and Princeton, and some of the young men who attended Charleston College often did graduate work at European universities as well. Those studying medicine often went to Germany for their medical education. Many of the Lowcountry planters were physicians: it was almost a necessity for them to be trained to give immediate medical attention to their families and their slaves on their isolated plantations.

Yet however far the planters ventured, the prudent ones like James McElhenney and his father-in-law Hugh Wilson spent most of their time at home protecting their investments and supervising plantation crops. Their livelihood came primarily from the plantation, and fluctuating weather and prices on the cotton market made a planter’s continuing prosperity chancy at times.

By the nineteenth century the principal crops for Lowcountry planters south of Charleston were cotton and rice. In the Lowcountry the silky Sea Island type of cotton flourished and after the invention of the cotton gin in 1790, cotton became the most profitable crop. The earlier crops had been also been labor intensive, and the system of using black slaves for plantation labor was already in place: some of the original settlers from England had settled for a time in Barbados, and brought the slave system that had worked so profitably for them on their plantations in the West Indies. James McElhenney’s affluence was marked as much by owning the 80 enslaved human beings that took care of his family, homes, and crops, as it was by owning two homes magnificently furnished, a library of fine books, horses and carriages, and other worldly goods.

Ada’s father’s prosperity was reinforced by the fact that he and his wife Joanna inherited land, houses, furniture, silver, jewelry and art objects from the estates of their ancestors; as well as the fact that their parents were very generous to them. He and Joanna were among those able to regularly travel to South Carolina upland resorts and northern watering places like Saratoga Springs during the summer months. They even traveled to Europe and may have taken their children. Ada would grow up to be an indefatigable traveler, and she spoke French fluently, perhaps a legacy from traveling as well as her education.19

As a man of wealth it was expected of James McElhenney that he would not only be prudent about protecting his investments in the present, but make plans for his future and that of his family. At the time of a trip to Europe in 1838, James McElhenney went to family friend and lawyer Edward McCrady, Sr. to make his first will,20 taking care to make sure not only that his family would be well provided for if he died at sea (for in that era, ocean voyages could be very dangerous), but giving specific instructions for six-year-old Eugene’s higher education. McElhenney may have traveled abroad to consult European doctors for a health problem that would make him an invalid and ultimately end his life at age 39 on September 6, 1841. He was among many of his time to exemplify the old Charleston saying that their locale was “in the Spring a paradise, in Summer a hell, and in Autumn a hospital.”

James McElhenney’s subsequent more detailed will from 1839,21 plus the records of the dispersal of his estate, and that of his wife Joanna, who died in 1848, give many details of expenses for the McElhenney children during their growing years. In 1841, Joanna was designated her children’s guardian, and co-executor of the will with her father, Hugh Wilson, (the second) and Edward McCrady, Sr., their lawyer and close family friend. In the dispersals of the estate as time went on, ample funds were devoted to Eugene’s
education and needs as well as those of Ada and Susan. One of the first entries for the children in 1841 provided for their mourning clothing to be made, with special bonnets for the girls. That along with the bills for the doctor, the funeral, and the “whitening” and carving of the tombstone for James McElhenney’s grave in the McElhenney plantation burial ground tell their own sad story.

In his obituary, there are strong hints that although when well James McElhenney might have gone overboard enjoying the material rewards of this world, when death approached from his “painful and wasting disease,” he immersed himself deeply in his religion, and whatever spiritual comfort it offered.

Difficult as it was to lose her husband, Joanna seems to have managed well, with her father Hugh Wilson, and her mother Anne, while she lived, taking a special interest in the McElhenney children along their father’s sister, Emily Hayne. We don’t know many details of Joanna Wilson McElhenney’s life, but being the daughter of a powerful and wealthy planter like Hugh Wilson meant that she would have been raised to marry well, be a good wife and mother, manage the domestic details of plantation life. The dispersals of the estate after James’ death show no wildly extravagant spending on Joanna’s part, and everything was carefully managed.

But by April 1848, Joanna was dead at the age of 38, leaving three orphans. The inscription on her tombstone, however formal and conventional, gives a good idea of what had been expected of her, and what her daughters would be expected to become. It declares that Joanna “exhibited traits of character that would elevate humanity,” was a dutiful, affectionate wife and mother, “consistent and a good Christian.” That Joanna was “daughter of Hugh Wilson” was carved in larger letters that any other thing on her tombstone, and as guardian of Eugene, Ada, and Susan, co-executor of their estate, and their only living grandparent, Hugh Wilson was destined to take an even larger part in his grandchildren’s lives than of his daughter’s.

The first change for the children after their mother’s death was their grandfather Wilson moving them from their house on Toogoodoo to their Aunt Emily Hayne’s house in Charleston. He quickly put the Toogoodoo house, plantation, and furniture up for sale, though he retained the uncultivated pinelands that were the children’s inheritance. So the house that was one secure landmark of Ada’s childhood was immediately lost to her.

Ada was well acquainted with Ravenswood, on Wadmalaw Island about 20 miles south of Charleston, however, the principal residence among several plantations her grandfather Wilson owned where she would spend part of the year. Wilson owned 300 slaves who produced the wealth that enabled him like many other wealthy planters to emulate the life of an English country gentleman, spending his leisure time in hunting and riding. He was among those who even pursued intellectual pursuits. He had stables, and a deer park of 5000 acres fenced in exclusively for deer hunting. He also had a pack of hounds and dogs, several huntsmen, and even a separate run for his gamecocks. A visitor described Ravenswood: “It was a fine plantation, one of those where they raised “Sea Island Cotton,” a long-stapled cotton very celebrated and only raised, I believe, on the coast and the islands near here…We arrived at Mr. Wilson’s place for dinner and were handsomely entertained…he was a very rich man at the time I stayed at his beautiful old place in 1853, but the Civil War ruined him.”

The idealized version of elite plantation life often represented in novels and travel accounts of the day would have the men devoting leisure time to hunting or other pursuits, after taking care of supervisory plantation concerns, while the women, after prayers and breakfast, spending the day practicing the guitar, playing chess, copying music, or writing verse for their albums. They might sew while someone read aloud. If they ventured outside, they might go walking, play badminton, go horseback riding, or take a drive.

But in reality the men and women on a working plantation did not spend all their time at leisure, and Ada’s upbringing was deeply influenced by the fact that she might expect to someday become the wife of a planter. The plantation mistress had responsibilities that complemented her husband’s responsibilities in running the plantation. She could expect to spend her time seeing to the health of her own family as well as visiting the sick in the slave cabins. She supervised food supply and preparation, the production of all clothing, and the training of all household servants. She was often pregnant until her childbearing years ceased at menopause, and if not pregnant, might be nursing the newest infant. If her husband was away for a long time, and the overseer was not competent or had to be let go, she might even supervise work in the fields.
Ada’s grandfather Hugh Wilson was not just concerned with successfully running his plantations and living like an English country squire. He was active and influential in the church and the community as an Elder in the Presbyterian Church on John’s Island and the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston. He was also a Trustee of the Presbyterian Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina and his public service included acting as Commissioner of Free Schools, and Justice of the Peace.25

Wilson had influential friends, and often asked their advice about the McElhenney children’s education and upbringing. He chiefly consulted with his co-executor, Edward McCrady, Sr., (who seems to have been especially fond of Ada) but sometimes called in Christopher G. Memminger, a lawyer and politician also interested in education, as well. Wilson was one of those who aided Memminger when he set up a system of public education for Charleston in the 1850s and Memminger would later become a member of the Confederate Cabinet in the Civil War.

The compounding of interest on the investments and securities left to the McElhenney children, and all their expenses from the estate were carefully recorded and Hugh Wilson often generously supplemented what the estate allowed for the children. Yet even with a loving grandfather as her principal guardian, Ada may have felt uncomfortable in a legal situation where her every expense was subject to scrutiny. This circumstance may have caused her to identify later with the blonde, beautiful, vulnerable character Ada Clare in Charles Dickens’ novel Bleak House, published in 1855. In the novel, the lives of the character Ada Clare and her loved ones were dominated by the settlement of an estate in the English Court of Chancery. Ada McElhenney was an avid reader of Dickens and the novel came out when she was establishing an acting and writing career in New York, and thinking of changing her name. Her choice of Ada Clare as a pseudonym was most likely inspired by Dickens’ heroine.27

When Joanna McElhenney died in April, 1848, Ada was not quite fourteen, and the loss of her mother was difficult enough without her body’s changes in adolescence, and her family’s new expectations of her to become a lady now that she was growing into womanhood. She described herself at that time as a “hearty girl” used to “exercise in the open air,” and that “running, swimming, climbing, and wrestling” had produced in her “a vigorous health and an exuberant flow of spirits.” Her teachers scorned this, however, and tried to direct her interest to “sewing and worsted work.” Ada remembered her grandmother previously bribing her with sweets to get her to work on embroidery.

At this time “when most girls are budding into coquetry,” Ada recounted being taught “it was my pious duty to do nothing for myself that I could tease a man into doing.” But she refused because she preferred boys as “rough and tumble” companions for “climbing trees, riding horses bareback, swimming in the open stream, and paddling leaky boats.”

Her female relatives had been “brought up to the old girl-slaughtering style,” especially her Aunt Emily Hayne, who was from all evidence the family member primarily responsible for training her to be a lady. Aunt Emily and other relatives “remonstrated with me . . .wept over me, warned me, and prayed for me. I was entreated to become that devitalized and automatic thing, a perfect lady.”

She remembered with humor her efforts to curb her healthy appetite by drinking a glass of vinegar before breakfast, and eating lemons to bring on “a stylish headache,” but that her “health would not go.” However her family eventually won out. She was serious about finally having to “bid good-bye to climbing, wrestling, and shinny sticks,” and would forever be sorry she hadn’t been a tomboy just a little longer. As a grown woman, she felt that girls should be allowed to “cultivate their animal spirits, since the toils and pains of female existence so soon bring heaviness of spirit.”28

Ada felt the pressures of becoming a lady, and soon would be expected to think about marriage too. Speaking of this experience of young women of the elite class, Jane and William Pease write: “. . .marriage and motherhood, the roles that cultural values imposed on women generally, were made yet more compelling because parents urged alliances with other families of similar-or better-standing. So the personal compatibility of future spouses. . .was often overshadowed even in the minds of much-courted belles by the pressure to marry well and soon.”29

In summer of 1848, soon after her mother’s death, Ada accompanied her Aunt Emily and Cousin Paul Hayne on an extended visit to the Upcountry. Emily had always been ailing, and hoped a visit to summer resorts, and sociable relatives might improve her health. Indeed in a letter describing their visit to the
Upcountry to his cousin Susan Hayne, September 20, 1848, Paul blamed his mother’s illness on the “terrible summers” of sub-tropical heat that he thought particularly hard on women.30

First the three went to Madison Springs Hotel to enjoy stylish social life in the cool piney air. Next they traveled to the Pendleton district where they were houseguests of the noted statesman and distant relative John C. Calhoun. Paul enjoyed his closer glimpse of Calhoun, and was impressed by the simplicity of Calhoun’s personal manners in this intimate setting, so different from the “chilling dignity” Paul expected from so noted a public figure.

They visited other relatives in Greenville, South Carolina and ended up in the Edgefield district at Cousin Francis Wilkinson Pickens’ “delightful residence,” Edgewood. Paul commented that Francis’ second wife had certainly done well for herself to share Pickens’ magnificent home and social life. All the wining and dining, and rubbing elbows with rich and powerful relatives was beneficial to both Emily’s health and 18-year-old Paul’s social education and future prospects. However it had not eliminated Ada’s tomboyish activities. She struggled through the trip with “lame feet,” the result of being bitten by a poisonous insect while “running wild and barefoot through the woods” at Madison Springs.

After this trip Ada’s family arranged for her further education and she was enrolled in the Misses Bates’ Seminary at 11 Church Street in a fashionable neighborhood near the Battery.31 It was considered one of the two finest private secondary schools for women in Charleston.32 Originally Headmistress Mary Bates had come from a Vermont family prominent in both the church and education (her father was President of Middlebury College) to teach John C. Calhoun’s children. Subsequently she and her sister Ann became directors of the Pendleton Female Academy in 1838, and by 1843 they ended up in Charleston running their own prestigious school teaching both day and boarding students.

Mary Bates’ correspondence reveals the mixture of conservative and progressive ideas underlying her educational philosophy and goals for the girls under her care. In 1839, she wrote to her Vermont-based friend, Charles Dana, Jr., a frequent correspondent, to describe herself and her sister Ann as “perfectly settled in their Southern home.” (Dana would later become prominent in both politics and journalism and Ada would encounter him in New York literary circles.) Bates noted that she and her sister liked everything about the climate and plantation life with families never having to lock their doors at night because they were “protected by their faithful blacks,” and claimed “these institutions of the South are not understood at the North.”33

Her letters to Dana reveal that she accepted the prevailing ideas for educating women North and South: that they must be well-educated to operate in their “Women’s Sphere” as good wives and mothers, but certain fields of knowledge were beyond their “delicate” minds’ ability to grasp. The Bates School did offer advanced training in modern European languages yet this was not for intellectual enrichment alone, but because Bates believed that “Many young ladies will travel to Europe and...also will be an influence in polite society.” On the progressive side the Bates school was unusual in that the honor system was the only discipline used, and Mary Bates was among the earliest advocates for young women to stay in school longer to get as much formal education as possible.34

Among the school’s offerings were English literature, rhetoric, and belles lettres, Latin and Greek, and lectures in philosophy and chemistry. Also offered as extras were drawing, and painting, singing lessons and instruction in piano, harp, and guitar, ornamental needlework, and making wax flowers. Mary Bates believed in Bible study, which Ada received at home and at church as well. Ada’s later display of mathematical knowledge may have resulted from a later addition to the curriculum, because it was not in the 1852 school prospectus.35 Judging by Ada’s lifelong interest in reading, writing, and the arts, she must have made the most of the academic subjects offered, and financial records from the McElhenney estate show that she did take piano and singing lessons.

Bates Seminary offered a place for elite planters’ daughters to get more social “finishing” before a formal entry into society. Even Upcountry families sent their daughters to the school hoping they would gain some Charleston sophistication. However, not every family was delighted with the results. A letter survives from Ada’s time as a student in which an Upcountry father wrote his daughter that he was coming to take her out of the school because he wanted her to remain “as plain and as unaffected as when she left home. . .in the humbler walks of life in the back country.” He hoped she had not already been
“contaminated” by “those false refinements always practiced in the social annals of City Life” including “flattery where praise pours from the lips while malice rankles the heart.”

After several years at school Ada began to attract the attention of the “college youths” – by now she had the face and figure that would draw admiration for the rest of her life. She had fluffy blonde hair with a reddish tint, dark blue eyes set wide apart under level brows, a “tip-tilted” nose and a slender, lithe body.

She dressed beautifully, had a soft though authoritative way of speaking, and charming manners, typical of members of the Charleston elite, although later in her literary and dramatic career she could become quite feisty when she felt it necessary to defend herself against what she perceived as unfair criticism.

At school she was not so preoccupied with Charleston social life that she neglected her studies. She became a good scholar capable of intense concentration. She remembered later in an article in the New York Atlas, December 7, 1856, that she took great interest in “the intellectual world that burst upon my sight,” and soon there was a new phase in her life that saw her “no longer oppressed…it became the custom to call me beautiful and talented,” and yet, though she enjoyed that attention:

All the warmth of my heart and head seemed to flow into the worship I paid my intellectual heroes…First it was Byron, whose great genius Intermingled with all manner of florid flashiness and bombast…and Keats and Mary Wollstonecraft, until I finally rose to Tennyson, and Shelley, and Mrs. Barrett Browning and Carlyle.

When Ada began to write poetry, her cousin Paul Hamilton Hayne watched over her first literary efforts, and encouraged her. By the early 1850s, Hayne had finished his education, but after some success as a poet, decided to leave the practice of law for a literary career. He had already gained experience as assistant editor of the Southern Literary Gazette in 1852. Among family members, only his wife Minna Hayne encouraged him. Others thought Hayne foolish to leave a secure future in law and potentially in politics too, since he was the nephew of the late statesman Robert Y. Hayne, and also had politically powerful relatives in the Pickens and Calhoun family.

If Ada had already begun thinking about her chances for a literary career herself at this time, she must have observed the difficulties Hayne and other aspiring Charleston-based writers had sustaining a professional writing life. Only Charlestonian William Gilmore Simms after a long struggle was recognized nationally for his historical novels and stories. Before 1850, according to Butterworth, “Simms acted as literary emissary to the North. He knew the important literary figures in Philadelphia and New York, and cultivated their sympathies for the South and its writers.” He worked hard at giving Charleston writers like Paul Hayne and his friend poet Henry Timrod as well as other Southern writers opportunities to develop themselves in literary publications he edited. Even so, writers were often forced to scrape along editing or contributing to short-lived journals that paid little. Hayne at least had financial help from his mother’s inheritance.

Ada was well aware that her cousin Paul, seeking to be known and published more widely, was beginning to correspond and visit with Northern publishers, writers, and editors, probably with Simms as mentor. This was absolutely necessary if he expected to develop a literary career. Hayne, later reminiscing in an article in The Southern Bivouac wrote that Charlestonians “are intensely provincial…Literature they despise.” Though Charleston had more than its share of the intelligentsia, writers, and some publishing houses too, somehow, for complex reasons, the prosperous elite of the city failed to give solid support to its writers, and particularly their literary magazines. For example, Henry Timrod would become noted as one of the better poets of his time and place, and yet Ada would have to inquire from New York later about what was happening to Timrod “because I have not had any word about him…He is a true genius, and I think it a great pity he is not placed in some sphere where his talents could develop themselves more brilliantly.”

So if Ada’s cousin Paul and other Charlestonians had such difficulties finding local support while becoming professional writers, what would this mean for Ada’s ambitions? Where could a beginner get published? In 1845 William Gilmore Simms had been the initiator and editor of the miscellany The Charleston Book to offer opportunity for publication for local writers, and he also included a few writers more widely known.
Ada read *Godey's Lady's Book* and other women's magazines and novels that were beginning to be written by women, and may have been encouraged to become a writer by the growing success of American women writers in the 1850s. Nathaniel Hawthorne's remark about the “mob of damned scribbling women” describing this success has become a classic cliché, but reveals a truth about the numbers of successful women writers. Before the Civil War, 40 per cent of the novels reviewed in journals and newspapers were by women. By the 1850s, best-seller lists show that women were authors of half of the most popular literary works.

Although I find no record of Ada Clare and Charlestonian Susan Petigru King (Bowen) meeting in person, Ada may have been encouraged by King’s literary success. In 1854, King’s first book, *Busy Moments of an Idle Woman*, comprised of a short novel and four short stories, was published by a New York publisher and won some critical acclaim. King published other novels and stories that all drew from experiences in her own elite Charleston background, challenged many of its customs and especially deplored what she saw as the way marriage could put narrow limits on a woman’s life and self-expression. Certainly King’s subject matter and satirical style may have influenced Ada too.

Fortunately, Ada would soon have a source of encouragement for her writing when she had an unusual opportunity to see her poems, essays, and stories published in a local publication, the *Charleston College Magazine*. Women would not be admitted to Charleston College until 1918, and Ada was the only female writer included in the magazine that gave students, professors, and others in the community like Timrod a place to publish essays and poetry. The magazine contained news of student activities like balls, oratory competitions, literary societies, and commencement exercises as well as comments on the local and national scene, including the growing hostility between North and South.

Ada’s association with the magazine grew out of her friendship with one of the editors Julian Mitchell, a junior at the college. He was a friend and classmate of her brother, Eugene, and their similar family background made Mitchell suitable as a friend and perhaps future suitor for Ada. Mitchell would later have a distinguished career as a lawyer, Major in the Confederate Army, and civic leader. When he and Ada became friends in 1854, they had in common their literary interests, including a mutual interest in Byron’s life and poetry, considered unsuitable reading, especially for a young lady, because of Byron’s flamboyant life. Ada would write Mitchell on September 24, 1854, that she wished he was with her in New York to read aloud while she sewed where “there would be no one to talk about it,” away from the gaze of the diligent Charleston chaperones.

Mitchell’s article in the first issue of the *College Magazine* in April 1854 was “A Vindication of Lord Byron,” declaring Byron’s literary work to be so important that one should not avoid it because of Byron’s bad character in his treatment of his wife, and claiming that Byron showed good character in other aspects of his life such as his fight to free Greece from Turkish oppression. Mitchell sent the magazine to Ada, who was then visiting her cousin Francis Wilkinson Pickens at Edgewood, reminding her to quickly send her article promised for the May issue.

Ada replied to his request on April 3, 1854, saying she would send her article on Alfred Tennyson’s *The Princess*, but, as young ladies were supposed to do, denied she had any intellectual ability, “I warn you that my article is no profound or analytical review … All that I write must come from the heart, not from the head.” She asked him not to leave out another article to make space for hers, for “in all probability mine will be laughed at…”

However, her next comments belied her ladylike opening. She wrote about disagreeing “so thoroughly” with Mitchell’s article that she would like to write an answer, but didn’t want to “fight…immediately after you step upon the stage of the literary world.” She also mentioned another book she wanted to review “which I would like to have the pleasure of condemning…it is the most unfathomable nonsense.”

Ada would write critical articles in the May 1854 issue of the *College Magazine* on *Home Scenes and Home Sounds* by H. Marion Stephens, and in the June issue on *Lady Geraldine’s Courtship* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the noted English poet. She showed the abilities that she would later develop writing literary and drama reviews and on a variety of other topics for New York and San Francisco literary newspapers, though she wrote Mitchell she considered this writing to be just sketches that she might later develop. Even in this early work, her criticism could be uncompromising to the point of being caustic.
Ada was willing to forego blasting her friend’s first article, but rapped Stephens’ plot-thickened stories because they left her “in a state of coma” with their “tremendous whirl of ruin, agony, ecstasy, passion, war, madness and sudden death.” She thought Stephens imitated the style of another popular writer Fanny Fern, but lacked Fern’s originality.54

Originality was the thing she valued in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poetry: it had no “echoes from Byron, Shelley, or Tennyson.” She praised her to the skies in the June 1854 College magazine only noting “small faults” of “occasional quaintness or obscurity of expression.” She faulted Edgar Allan Poe for not praising Browning enough in his critical articles, when Ada thought that some of Poe’s poetry was influenced by Mrs. Browning. She thought most male critics rapped Browning because they were almost always hostile to “a woman who understands Greek.”

Her article about Tennyson’s The Princess was published in the May 1854 College magazine. Tennyson’s book-length poem, a long narrative in blank verse, dealing with the pros and cons of educating women, ranged in tone from mock-heroic and satirical to sentimental. It was first published in 1847, in England and revised and enlarged in subsequent editions – Ada’s article was based on the final version of 1853.

The poem was timely dealing as it did with controversial issues: the value of educating women, and their proper sphere. Tennyson did not, in the poem, express his personal feelings on these issues. The Princess provoked floods of articles both serious and satirical in England and America. In America, Horace Greeley, editor of the New York Tribune and a staunch supporter of women’s rights, wrote about it in Godey’s Lady’s Book. He thought it made a strong case for education leading to “wider horizons” for women. Indeed, in January 1850 Godey’s began a series on woman’s intellectual and moral influence using excerpts from The Princess, and praising it highly.55

The poem tells of a Prince who goes to claim his betrothed Princess Ida to find that she has created a university for women only, and wants no part of marriage. The Prince and his companion disguise themselves as women, enroll in the university, but are discovered, and the Princess is furious. War between the sexes follows when the Prince’s father sends armies to fight Princess Ida and her forces for not honoring her betrothal contract. The women not only become warriors, but also turn the university into a hospital to nurse their wounded enemies, and when the Princess nurses the Prince, they fall in love, and of course live happily ever after, avoiding the resolution of the issues of educating women and their proper sphere.

Ada’s article begins with ladylike disclaimers: not for her to “reproduce the brilliant analytical essays of Edgar Allan Poe” upon Tennyson’s poems: “No critic I. My heart leads my head in the study.” She continues, “In the poem…Tennyson takes up the subject which has so long agitated the world – the distinctive individualities of man and woman…He gives us the result of deep thought upon woman and her sphere: he sees that the matter lies deeper than most men are willing to acknowledge.”56

She comments on men’s expectations of women: “They prate to us of domestic bliss, and the affections the only domain of women until we are led to believe that they place the divine acme of happiness in having an indifferent husband and fourteen small children.”

Furthermore, she believes that more than the affections should be woman’s domain: “What the woman needs most is breadth of thought” even though “her delicate physical nature and too sensitive soul” might bar her from “heading armies” or being a judge or a politician. She pleads for women to have the right to enjoy the expansion of the intellect and imagination that comes from “soaring with the wings of the poet and philosopher in the realms of thought.” Without the life of the mind “a woman’s existence becomes a series of little acts, a dead level of vapid monotony.”

Thus Ada supported the idea that a woman needs education for her own personal growth and satisfaction. Among those supporting educating women in 1854, there were few sharing Ada’s viewpoint. Most would educate women because of their moral, intellectual, and cultural influence on their husbands and children in their “angel in the house” role in the “women’s sphere.” Yet there was growing interest in giving women access to higher education so they could teach school beyond the elementary years.

However, Ada did not believe development of a woman’s “head” should allow her to neglect her “heart.” She believed women could not be fulfilled without “a strong exercise of the affections …Every true woman would sacrifice to her love the most brilliant position on earth.” And yet education might keep a woman from complete emotional dependence on men for “love may be blighted, those we love may die
or prove faithless." A dependent woman “who has no mental resources finds herself reduced to despair…while the woman who has mental resources can seek refuge…in a calm and elevated mind.”

Ada praises Tennyson’s departure from the hackneyed images of the hero being the strong protector of the clinging heroine. “Their love does not grow out of the venerable, worm-eaten analogy of the tree with the vine twining about it.” In The Princess, the Prince and Princess Ida are equals in their love. She asks whether women can really depend on men for protection. “They are willing to defend us from lions and wolves, there being no possibility of woman coming in contact with them, but who will defend women from men themselves?”

Ada thinks Princess Ida is a “glorious character” that fights free of the restraints “harsh and narrow-minded men” have placed on women. Ada points out that the Prince understands that the Princess “feels the wrongs of her sex” and wants to be a “champion,” and is more than strong enough to take care of herself, but he seeks a love “built on a nobler foundation than a sense of dependence…those ties may exist as well between a dog and his master, as between man and woman.”

Ada ended hoping Tennyson’s ideals of equality between the sexes in love relationships, and opportunities for women to be educated and express themselves freely would be “the foreshadowing of the living truth” and quoted from the poem: “The woman’s cause is man’s: they rise or sink/Together, dwarfed or godlike, bound or free.”

She had also submitted her article to the National Era magazine of Washington, D.C. who published it in their August 24, 1854 issue with the title, “Woman-Her Influence and her True Position,” signed A.A.M. This was significant for several reasons. First of all, it was a feather in Ada’s cap for herself, an unknown young woman contemplating a literary career, to be published in the National Era, a widely-read national magazine whose editor was Gamaliel Bailey, whose literary editor was John Greenleaf Whittier, and that featured prominent writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne. Also, the magazine had recently announced in their May 4, 1854 issue that they were overloaded with “literary contributions and controversial essays,” did not need more, and would select “the best” to be published. So the editors must have thought her essay well-written and timely.

However, besides publishing articles on women’s issues, the magazine was known for its strong abolitionist viewpoint. Interest in the two issues was closely related at the time because the champions for women’s political rights had first taken up the quest as an outgrowth of their interest in abolishing slavery. In 1851-1852, editor Bailey had struck a powerful blow for the abolitionist cause when he serialized Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe in the National Era. It would become a best-selling book and a popular play – its influence spread far and wide. So Ada had sent her feminist article to a publication she knew also supported the abolition of an institution that provided the economic foundation of her family and community’s way of life.

This was a portent of Ada breaking away from her background. It was provocative enough for her to publish her feminist essay with its strong-minded opinions contrary to those of her family about women’s higher education and the proper “woman’s sphere” in the College Magazine. The “cult of chivalry” of the Southern elite put their women on a pedestal. As Daniel R. Hundley described the Southern woman in 1860, “She lives only to make her home happy…She literally knows nothing about ‘woman’s rights’…or ‘free thinking’; but faithfully labors on in the humble sphere allotted her of heaven.” Furthermore, writing about magazines and how they treated the “woman question” differently in the North and the South in the 1850s, Frank Luther Mott observed that it was in the South and its periodicals that “the new woman’s movement met its strongest opposition…in the North opinion was changing, very slowly to be sure, but perceptibly.”

Bad enough Ada’s local publication of outspoken opinions on controversial subjects—the ultimate provocation must have been for Ada to place it in a national magazine that was abolitionist-oriented. Ada was not only getting off her pedestal: she was knocking it to pieces. Her growing rebelliousness heated up a family crisis that had been brewing since the previous summer, and that would ultimately lead to her running away from home to New York City.
CHAPTER 2: NORTH TO A NEW LIFE--
SARATOGA AND THE CITY

Ada’s rebelliousness began to be apparent during her summer visit the year before to the resort Saratoga Springs in New York. Having enjoyed even more prosperity than usual during the 1850s, Ada’s family began regularly spending summers there and in the summer of 1853, she visited with two other single young women and their chaperone, a distant female cousin. Many Charleston families known by Ada’s grandfather also made the trip, so more than one person was “looking out for Ada,” an occupation that would become more and more difficult over time.

It took the Charlestonians about 60 hours to reach New York City by the steamers that regularly left Adger’s Wharf. There they usually stayed over for shopping and cultural activities, and then traveled on by railroad or ship to Saratoga Springs in upstate New York. Saratoga Springs ranked with Newport, Rhode Island as one of the most fashionable American watering-places-- offering pleasant climate and the mineral water “cures,” and perhaps most important, a hectic social life, and plenty of shopping. Wealthy families gravitated to fashionable hotels like the United States and Union Hall that were like miniature cities.

From the season’s July 4th onset until its September 1st ending, the sidewalks of Saratoga Springs could be described as “a continuous fair”. Branches of some of the finest New York establishments offered merchandise such as fancy gloves, jewelry and millinery. Other offerings included fine wines, lace, and embroidery. Hurdy-gurdy players mingled with strolling fashionable tourists, as did newsboys hawking Harper’s publications. This colorful background provided a well-known site for parents to hunt for suitable husbands for their daughters of marriageable age. “Minnie Myrtle,” reporting from Saratoga for the Times in July, 1853, wrote that, “The very first thing that a young man should do in coming to Saratoga is fall in love and be married, or keep out of the drawing-room.” But the resort, known for gambling and racier pursuits, also attracted the demi-monde including fortune hunters of both sexes. Indeed “Myrtle” reported that the most attractive ladies to be seen in hotel lobbies were “transient” – and very flirtatious. Male fortune hunters stalked their prey also. Respectable people kept a close eye on their teen-aged sons, and even closer one on their daughters.

The role of the marriageable daughter in the Springs was to accompany her family to the three hearty meals served each day, to appear in lovely dresses and promenade often to show off those dresses, to flirt with eligible beaus known to her family, attend the frequent balls, “hops” and concerts on the piazza, sightsee to nearby spas and fairs, and ride out to Moon Lake for dinner. A young lady could sometimes arrange to meet a properly introduced young man in the moonlit Rose Garden, with her chaperone not too far away.

In the summer of 1853, Ada’s chaperone reported to her grandfather that Ada had been “imprudent.” That word could mean many things. To Ada’s planter grandfather it probably meant too much interest displayed in the opposite sex. Even Minnie Myrtle warned young ladies that: “in the evenings…romance is for those who stroll away…to ramble in the moonlight…light hearts … light vows…Caution!”

But there were other things going on in Saratoga Springs besides clandestine romance that summer that may have given Ada “imprudent” ideas just as disturbing to her grandfather. There was a Woman’s Rights Convention in August. Horace Greeley and others like him, liberal on social issues, often gave speeches. There were also concerts by well-known artists, and the newest rage was Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) whose musical accomplishments as concert pianist and composer combined with his handsome face and charming presence to fascinate women. Gottschalk was already famous in Europe, and had returned to America in 1853 to firmly establish his career in his native country. The first American to win international acclaim as a pianist and composer, he was the first to present solo piano recitals in the United
States and the first American to use Creole, Black, and American folk melodies as well as Caribbean rhythms and dances in classical compositions.

Gottschalk would become Ada’s lifelong obsession, but never a source of great happiness. At the summer resort in 1853, Ada might have begun by worshiping him from afar, as so many young women did who attended his concerts and performed his music as diligent amateur pianists. It is possible that Ada and Gottschalk may have met and exchanged a few words in public, and even flirted a bit. He was a notorious charmer, and she, so used to attention from young men in Charleston, may have been disappointed that she could not capture his exclusive attention. In an 1856 article in the *Atlas* Ada recalled how she had agonized over Gottschalk during the winter of 1853-1854, and how she had written a “poetical notice” of him which her cousin Paul helped submit to an unnamed woman’s magazine. As was the custom, the editor of the magazine announced the poem’s coming publication in the correspondence column, but considered it the work of “a young enthusiastic girl with an over-sensitive nature. We hope she has a mother.”

Her cousin did not approve of these feelings nor did the rest of her family, and no wonder. Ada was already nineteen and still unmarried, though beautiful, eligible and soon to be an heiress. Probably she preferred to remain unmarried because she was not ready to settle for one of her local suitors, wanted to prolong their attention and the fun of being courted as long as possible, and being not at all ready to face married life, child-bearing, adult responsibilities, and being isolated on a plantation for part of each year. Worshipping Gottschalk, the far-away ideal, allowed her to postpone having to make choices she knew would set the pattern of the rest of her life. Her family wanted a flesh-and-(blue)blood Charlestonian suitor for her, and for her to get married and get on with the life they planned for her. Her brother Eugene had already turned 21, come into his inheritance, and done all the socially expected things. He married a suitable wife, Miss Hanahan, a relative of his Aunt Adelaide Wilson Hanahan, bought a fine, 800-acre Lowcountry plantation, Woodlands, on John’s Island, and was settling into the life planned for him.

All these factors contributed to the crisis in May, 1854, where Ada and her Grandfather Wilson were at sword’s points over her wish to spend summer in the North again. He forbade this, and declared he would use any legal means to prevent it. He had almost certainly found out by then that her article “Woman-Her Influence and her True Position” was soon to be published in an abolitionist-oriented national magazine, and that did not help matters either. In the next few weeks of June, 1854, he convened numerous conferences in Edward McCrady’s law office about what to do about Ada’s “conduct,” that were duly recorded in McCrady’s desk diary. Wilson and McCrady spoke with Ada’s Aunt Emily and Cousin Paul Hayne, Ada’s brother Eugene, and even Christopher G. Memminger to try and to enlist their aid in getting Ada to behave. Ada herself must have been hiding out at someone’s house for she communicated with her grandfather and McCrady through notes.

Ada would let nothing stand in her way. McCrady’s desk diary of June 29, 1854, noted that Ada’s grandfather told him “Ada McElhenney went to New York yesterday in the steamer against his will and command having appropriated the funds of the John C. Calhoun monument in her hands to this use intending to pay interest on it.” This was the ultimate rejection of her family’s values. John C. Calhoun, dead by 1850, loyal champion of the South, had done everything in his distinguished political career to advance the best interests of the South. Southern planters worshipped him, and Ada was going North, after stealing money intended for his memorial even though she claimed she would pay interest on its use. At that time, Ada’s grandfather Wilson was one of those collecting money to build the Calhoun monument, which eventually became an important landmark in Charleston. The money she appropriated must have been at least several hundred dollars, and perhaps much more.

Ada stayed away much longer than she originally planned and here we must speculate about the factors that motivated her to prolong her stay in New York. The longer she stayed it seemed the less likely she was to return home. If Ada delayed because she was ashamed of stealing the money, and was afraid to face her family, surely after several months, her grandfather’s anger might have cooled, and he would have forgiven her. There is plenty of evidence over the years showing her family’s concern for her welfare, and repeated efforts to bring her home.

We have some evidence about Ada’s adjustment to a different style of life in New York, through her continued correspondence with Julian Mitchell and her contributions to the *College* magazine from 1854-1855. We have her letters but not his: from hers we can infer that he was her friend and confidant as well as
her editor. He valued her thoughts; as an editor he published everything she sent, even when she wrote on
topics not assigned her. Her letters and her contributions to the magazine during its span 1854-1855 reveal
much about the gradual development of her abilities and opportunities to become an actress and writer.

A positive reason for her extended stay in New York was that Ada had a wonderful time from the
beginning of her stay at Saratoga Springs. She wrote Mitchell in August of 1854, about being “lionized”
when she stayed at the popular, lively United States Hotel after her arrival on Fourth of July weekend.
“Minnie Myrtle” noted in the July, 1854 Times that “Everybody who aspires to be lionized comes to
Saratoga…As soon as his name is registered…all eyes turn to gaze”. Ada was her own best publicist, and
made sure her article in the College Magazine was “extensively circulated,” telling everyone it had been
reprinted in the August National Era.

Ada wrote Mitchell that she was sorry she broke her promise to him about leaving her New York
address at Russell’s Bookstore, the meeting-place for William Gilmore Simms and other Charleston literati,
claiming this was a result of “leaving very suddenly and in some confusion.” She wrote that she had not
immediately sent her address because she had originally planned to stay for only a few days in the city, but
she had decided to stay longer. She assured him that she intended to continue her contributions to his
magazine. Mitchell had wanted to arrange a meeting between Ada and one of his friends who wished to call
on her in New York City and she wrote she would be very happy to meet the friend, sending her address at
a small hotel, No. 11 West 24th Street, a fashionable neighborhood near Madison Square. Ada did not give
her new address to everyone. Her cousin Paul Hayne, in the northeast on literary business, heard she was in
New York City and looked for her, but wrote his wife Minna, “Ada, I am told is in town, but where she
stays, no one seems to know.” He could not find her.

Crucial to her decision to stay in New York longer was the check Edward McCrady sent her on August
7 for several hundred dollars. For once, his desk diary does not record any family consultations about
whether to send her money. It was due her from her parents’ estate, after all, and her family may have
assumed that denying Ada money would not bring her home any sooner. They would allow her time and
money to sightsee, shop, and have a good time, and perhaps when the rest of the vacationing
Charlestonians took the steamer back home, she would be among them, ready to apologize to her family
for going to Saratoga against her grandfather’s wishes using stolen money.

By September 25, 1854 Ada wrote Mitchell she was having a lively time in New York City, making new
friends, and attending theater and opera. She recounted that one of her new friends, Anne C. Lynch
(Botta), a writer and editor, called on her with a “standing invitation” to Lynch’s literary salon, “the most
brilliant the city offers. All the literati, musicians, distinguished foreigners in the city are always to be found
there.” Ada noted, “She will be a most valuable acquaintance to me.”

Tall and slender, with dark hair and blue eyes, Annie C. Lynch was well-known for the warm welcome
she gave aspiring artists as well as celebrities to her Saturday evening salons. She herself was a teacher,
wrote for many publications and was on the staff of the Home Journal. As early as 1846, she was noted for
her evening receptions entertaining well-known guests like Edgar Allan Poe, Margaret Fuller, William
Thackeray, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. However, she always welcomed newcomers to the world of the arts
who benefited from exchanging ideas with the celebrities. She herself was friend as well as critic to all.
Emerson described her home at 25 West 37th Street “the house of the expanding doors.”

Lynch never used her salon to climb the social ladder as some New York hostesses did; she was
interested in social activists as well as artists. At the time Ada first visited, “Lynchie’s” guest list included
the likes of Horace Greeley and Charles A. Dana, Jr., newspaper editors; Alice and Phoebe Cary, and
Richard Stoddard, poets; Nathaniel P. Willis, dandified, wealthy, and witty editor of the Home Journal, Julia
Ward Howe, poet and writer chiefly interested in women’s suffrage and the abolitionist cause, and many
others. Ada was delighted to be included among them even though she expressed her surprise in her
September 25 letter to Mitchell that they “speak such bad English generally.”

But while the New York literary world beckoned, she was not known there yet. Ada did not forget to
send Mitchell an article promised for the November, 1854 issue of the College Magazine. Though he had
asked her to write on Charlotte Corday’s assassination of Jean Paul Marat during the terrors of the French
Revolution, Ada had other ideas, and had written “on the subject on which [she had] always thought most
deeply – Love.” She hoped he would be pleased with it. Hints of her early thoughts about Gottschalk
appear in this article entitled “A Rationale of Watering Places” in which a young woman and world-weary man have a pseudo-philosophical dialogue. The young woman asserts that happy persons do not need the amusements of a watering-place resort to be made happy: they are able to experience happiness anywhere in the world. Instead she thought pleasure resorts “gave most pleasure to the reckless, the deeply disappointed, and those who have no hope in life.”77 The young woman describes how the hectic pace of the fashionable spa makes “Annabelle” forget being rejected by her true love who first wooed her, than became bored with her. Nevertheless, though unhappy she will not stop loving this man. She ends bemoaning the way men treat women who love them, and declares “curses, curses on love” to the background of “Gottschalk’s music . . . the wild creations of that still wilder spirit . . . its notes re-echoing the tones of his own indescribable voice.”

The connection between the content of this article, and the fact that by the time it was published in November, 1854, Ada had stayed in New York long past the time most visiting Charlestonians returned home, may have caused people to wonder. Indeed Ada must have gotten word of reaction to her article, because in her November, 1854 letter to Mitchell she wrote, “I understand that some of the good people of Charleston were a little shocked by my ‘Rationale of Watering Places.’” This may have given rise to the rumor, later often repeated by Ada’s family and their descendants, that Ada went North “under the spell of an infatuation for a musician” as her cousin Paul’s son William Hayne would write in a letter to Ada’s friend Marie Howland, February 16, 1897.

Though Gottschalk would become a persistent and long-running obsession in Ada’s life, there are other complex reasons why she first went to New York, decided to stay longer, and then never returned home. Though she was fascinated by Gottschalk’s charisma and the world of internationally known celebrities and probably had an earlier unrequited “crush” on him, their love affair did not come about until later. Gottschalk was in Cuba during 1854 and did not return to the United States until 1855; Ada certainly had not seen him in 1854 in Saratoga Springs, and did not expect to see him in New York among the distinguished company at Anne Lunch’s salon.

In September, 1854 Ada was still concerned about what the people at home were saying about her. She asked Mitchell, “Is Charleston still rife with infamous remarks about me?” and then made some rude remarks about Charleston. She had just finished reading Dickens’ novel Hard Times, thought it was “a fine satire on some of the glaring evils of our day,” and furthermore that “it represents some of the good people of Charleston, that lovely center of all that is good and virtuous.”78 She wrote that she had seen William Gilmore Simms, the South Carolina author the other day in town giving a series of lectures that she did not enjoy, even though she was fond of Simms. What she did admire was the cultural feast she was enjoying in New York. She told him it could not be compared “with our dear little city where Mr. Simms’ lectures get up quite an excitement,” reminding him that New York City had eleven theaters, three operas, not including other concerts, oratorios, lectures, and other amusements. She noted that she was “always to be found at the theater and the opera,”79 and that as much as she loved reading: “I live so fast that I cannot find the calmness necessary for [it].”

Theatrical and operatic performances abounded: her favorite performer was “the divine [Giulia] Grisi…the most magnificent actress I ever dreamed of” who appeared with her equally famous husband, the tenor Mario at Castle Garden, the popular entertainment center at the Battery in Bellini’s Norma and Lucrezia Borgia. Vera Brodsky Lawrence names them as “the supreme divinities of mid-nineteenth century opera” and other musical authorities agreed.80 At Wallack’s theater on Broadway, John Brougham, popular comic actor and author of over a hundred plays, headed the cast of Sheridan’s The Rivals. Lovers of Shakespeare could see E.L. Davenport, one of the first famous American-born actors, as Othello, or catch a production of Midsummer Night’s Dream at William Burton’s Chambers Street Theater.

Besides opera and legitimate theater, there were traveling circuses and equestrian spectacles like St. George and the Dragon at the Hippodrome. Minstrel Shows were extremely popular, and among the most well-known were the Christy and Woods show, as well as Buckley’s Ethiopian Opera House where there was a burlesque version of the same Lucrezia Borgia that Grisi and Mario were performing at Castle Garden. Barnum’s American Museum showed “curiosities” including “United Twins” joined at the back, a rhinoceros, and two 30-feet long African serpents, and at night put on the popular play, The Corsican Brothers. Meanwhile at the edge of the city, at Broadway and 42nd Street, the prime sightseeing destination
for New Yorkers and visitors alike was the Crystal Palace Exhibition\(^81\) that had opened in July of 1853. Modeled after London’s famous attraction, exhibiting over 100,000 items of industrial, agricultural, and artistic interest from 4000 exhibitors from all over the world, it was America’s first world’s fair. No wonder Ada was running from place to place in a constant state of excitement in this big metropolis filled with so much of interest to her.

By 1850 New York had half-million in population and was fast taking over the distinction of being the leading cultural center from Boston and Philadelphia. But despite the size of the city, Ada seemed to have no difficulty finding her niche. During the first two months of her stay, Ada made a hit in New York, and her head was turned. No less a celebrity than George William Curtis (1824-1892)\(^82\) met her at “Lynchie’s” salon, and called on her. A journalist, essayist, and novelist about New York society and Washington politics, he had a thirty-five year association with the influential Harper and Brother’s Publishing Company, and had just started to author the “Editor’s Easy Chair” column in \textit{Harper's Monthly Magazine}. It is likely that they discussed her literary career when they met, and though her work did not appear in Harper’s publications, Curtis probably used his influence to help her with the publication of her verse in the \textit{New York Atlas} in early 1855.

Ada also met the portrait painter Alexander Ransom who, according to a contemporary,\(^83\) “painted [her] in a numberless variety of artistic costumes and attitudes and expressions.” In winter 1855 two of Ransom’s five paintings of Ada were exhibited: one at the Boston Athenaeum and one at the New York National Academy of Design.\(^84\) At this same time it was Ransom who called on her one night and “forcibly took away from her to use for a painting” the daguerreotype she sat for to fulfill Julian Mitchell’s request. Ada wrote Mitchell that she had sat for “five portraits and two photographs this winter,” asking, “am I not multiplied?”\(^85\)

In a letter to Mitchell November 12, 1854, she mentioned among her new acquaintances “a young poet” who had “done nothing since he met me but write sonnets to the ‘Princess Ada, the Queen of Beauty’ – is it not curious?” She sounds as if she wanted Mitchell to sit up and take notice of her list of admirers. In the next paragraph she mentions seeing Mitchell’s friend Francis Woodford who called on her presenting his letter of introduction from Mitchell, noting they soon “fell into the most easy and sociable conversation. I liked him very much and asked him to call soon again.”

Curtis the literary celebrity, Ransom the painter, the “curious” lovesick poet, and Mitchell’s friend are all listed together in Ada’s catalogue with no particular emphasis on any one. Along with trying to sustain Mitchell’s interest in her and her writing, her letters conveyed the message that her new life was very exciting, and that everyone greatly appreciated her in New York City. She thumbed her nose at dull old Charleston where people did not appreciate her and said rude things about her, never admitting some of them might be true.

On November 29, 1854 Ada wrote Mitchell again in a sadder mood: if he were with her he would understand her “dull” letter. “It is intolerably cold and gloomy and dark, the snow falls incessantly whitening the bleak street…Broadway is filled with shivering horses and fur-covered stage drivers like polar bears.” Everything is wintry including the “Siberia” of her spirits. It was the first really cold spell of the year, and “everyone seems freezing to death.” This response to the change in weather was very unlike the pleasure Charlestonians felt when cooler weather spelled an end to the “sickly season,” and they could go home to the plantation.

In this mood she was glad to see someone from home when Mitchell’s friend Woodford from Charleston called on her again. She had a “nervous headache,”\(^86\) but Woodford made a good impression on her – “he is quite fine-looking.” She was a little homesick this day before Thanksgiving, and surprised that “nobody goes to church” on the holiday as they did at home, noting that on the contrary, it would be “quite a merry day in New-York.” She assured Mitchell, perhaps reassuring herself, that she would go out to dine, and have a good time herself.\(^87\)

And then Ada revealed to Mitchell probably the most profound reason for her gloom: the young “lovesick” poet (mentioned in her letter to Mitchell on November 12) had killed himself on November 15, 1854 after telling Ada he adored her but if she could give him no hope, “he was determined to die.” Ada told him there was not the slightest hope — she had never flirted with him or “trifled with him — he was...
“too terribly earnest for that.” He had then gone back to his boarding house and taken Prussic Acid and “died in the midst of writing me the most extraordinary letter ever penned.”

The *New York Times* reported the death of widely-known author and poet William North on November 15, 1854, as a suicide. Everyone speaking at the inquest, according to the coroner’s report, agreed that depression from lack of financial reward for his hard work, and an unhappy love affair caused North to take his own life. A letter left to Miss ____ was noted, her name was not disclosed. Other letters were left to his close friends who kindly arranged for his burial. The circumstances and date named in the coroner’s report exactly match the circumstances and date mentioned by Ada in her letter. Further proof that the woman involved was Ada comes from the memoirs of William Winter, an early member of her Bohemian circle who became Ada’s lifelong friend and later the well-known drama critic of the *New York Tribune*. In *Old Friends*, Winter wrote about North’s career and untimely death mentioning exactly the same dates and circumstances as the Ada and the *Times*, and implied Ada’s connection:

> The woman for hopeless love of whom North committed suicide was in after years known to me, and certainly she was beautiful enough to have inspired idolatrous passion in the breast of even a marble monument.

The tragic death of William North must have caused Ada to do some soul-searching. She was enjoying the attentions of many men, due to her beauty, or wit, or both. She thought she had not toyed with North’s affections, but she was a charismatic beauty, and he was extremely vulnerable: she may have felt guilt despite her assertions of innocence. She was no longer a Charleston belle supported by a code of conduct well understood by the young men of her own background who admired her. They all knew when to flirt, and when to be serious, and understood the rules of their courting ritual. North was not from that world, and Ada may have belatedly realized she should have handled North’s feelings with more tact and sensitivity, instead of bluntly dismissing him.

Her thoughts were as heavy as the drifting snow outside. By now most traveling Charlestonians had headed home for holidays with their families, unless they were going on to Europe to winter abroad. At the Ravenswood plantation her family would be busy preparing for the festive holidays ahead. She must have been thinking about staying in New York to make serious efforts to become a professional writer and wondering if she could sustain the effort to really establish herself. She had received another check from McCrady for expenses October 7, 1854 along with notice that preliminaries were under way to settle up her share of her inheritance by her twenty-first birthday in July, 1855. She knew receiving her inheritance was the only way she could develop a literary career and survive in New York because almost all of the writers Ada knew were struggling to survive financially.

Paradoxically, while the writers were struggling, advances in printing, growing literacy rates, as well as rapidly developing transportation systems were making large scale dissemination of the printed word possible. It was a time of explosive literary growth, particularly for the magazine industry. New York City, Ada Clare’s adopted home, became the leading publishing center of the nation and home to a varied and interesting group of writers and editors, particularly of literary magazines and newspapers.

One of Ada’s new friends, also a friend of North’s, was the rakish and talented writer, Fitz-James O’Brien. He was often called Edgar Allan Poe’s successor because of the bizarre subjects of many of his short stories, but he also wrote poetry, reviews, plays and humorous essays. At the time Ada first met O’Brien, he had recently come from Ireland in 1852, was being published often in journals like *Harper’s*, and was rapidly squandering his inheritance from his aristocratic family. However O’Brien had lately resorted to drastic measures to collect a long overdue advance from *Harper’s*. He picketed their office wearing a large cardboard sign that said I AM STARVING until they paid him.

But for William North financial survival had been no laughing matter. The *Times* article of November 15, 1854 quoted from an open letter he left with twelve pennies – on the envelope was written: “The remains of my fortune and labor for ten years.” So much for the career of a talented writer who was published in many well-known periodicals of the day including *Graham’s*, *Harper’s*, *The Knickerbocker*, and *The Whig Review* among others.
There had been magazines in the United States before Ada Clare’s generation; however, her lifetime spanned the golden age of magazine development in the United States. Eighteenth century port towns such as New York and Boston had long had local publications read primarily by their local populations. From the earliest days the average lifespan of a literary publication was just eighteen months, and even the most successful of publications averaged a circulation of only 1500. Most early magazines were miscellanies, and were mainly published for the elite. In these early days, there was also a near-absence of full-time, professional writers. Most pieces were by literate gentlemen and a few ladies, and often ran unsigned.

The early decades of the 19th century brought an end to the era of handset type, and increased printing speed and efficiency. More important, however, were other changes across the nation that ensured that the new printed word would be distributed to a large audience. The building of canals and roads, and the advent of the railroad, ensured that the new Western markets -- as well as those in the nation as a whole--would be opened to distribution of magazines, books, and newspapers. The building of the Erie Canal in 1825, in particular made New York City the link between Europe and the Western markets. A simultaneous expansion of public schooling, particularly in the more densely populated North, created a larger body of potential readers than ever before. On a similar note, growing movement for the education of females effectively doubled the reading public. Last, the growth of cities and the rise of urban life brought readers together, and created a demand for timely reading material, spurring the growth of daily newspapers, as well as weekly and monthly magazines.

The newspaper, magazine, and publishing industry responded robustly to the demand and Horace Greeley94 could serve as a symbol of this new age. In 1834, he and three others established the New Yorker, a weekly journal of literature, politics, and culture, and he used the success of this to develop one of the most prominent and influential newspapers in US history, the New York Tribune, which he edited for 30 years. According to Bayard Taylor, the Tribune “ranked next to the Bible in popularity in the Midwest.”95

The years between 1825 and 1850 saw a dramatic rise in monthly magazines and other publications, and where there had only been approximately one hundred periodicals existing in 1825, nearly 600 were being published in 1850, though many of them still had a very short lifespan. In New York City alone, readers were provided with James Gordon Bennett’s New York Herald (1835) and Greeley’s Tribune (1841) as timely, affordable reading material, the “penny press”, as well as countless magazines. Literary historian James Playsted Wood notes, “The many magazines of the mid-19th century were achieving what have been twin magazine objectives from the start: providing information and entertainment for many people...Much of the writing was merely the ephemeral work of competent hacks and journalists, but some was the best writing of a splendid period in American literary history.”96

Edgar Allan Poe’s impoverished career proves that the best writers were not necessarily the best paid and America had a flourishing “Grub Street”97 especially in New York City. Yet by 1850, New York was still the place to be or for writers. It was the acknowledged center of the growing magazine industry, outpacing both Boston and Philadelphia, early literary centers, in the publication of periodicals. In the 1850s, New York City alone boasted 107 publishers, twice as many as either Boston or Philadelphia. By 1860, approximately one-third of all magazines circulating in the United States originated from New York.

New magazines were emerging, boasting fine literary quality such as Harper’s New Monthly. The Atlantic Monthly, was born the same year, 1857, as the avant-garde Saturday Press that Ada Clare began contributing a weekly column to in 1859. As the number of professional magazines grew, a core of professional, full-time writers was developing. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, more and more magazines found themselves unable to avoid political commentary and it is estimated that the number of political periodicals doubled in the 1850s. William Lloyd Garrison’s The Liberator was founded in 1831 to argue for the abolition of slavery. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote critically of the Mexican War in the Massachusetts Quarterly, while the abolitionist-oriented National Era which had published Ada’s article on “The Princess” also published Harriet Beecher Stowe’s hugely influential Uncle Tom’s Cabin serially in the late 1850s. Literary historian John Tebbel reports, “Magazines, proliferating as they were, by 1850 had become a national platform for every kind of argument and reform movement,” adding, “They were more affluent and varied than ever, and for the first time they offered a career to writers.”100

The types of magazines were varied, from weeklies to monthlies to quarterlies. Literary weeklies tended to be cheaper and have the shortest lifespan, although there were some notable weekly successes,
like the New York Mirror, which ran from 1823-1846. Quarterlies included Margaret Fuller’s The Dial as well as many religious magazines. There was a great variation in the subscription rates as well. Three dollars a year was standard for large-scale magazines like Graham’s, while there also existed a large number of dollar magazines. Two of the most famous magazines of the era were Godey’s Lady’s Book and Graham’s Lady’s and Gentleman’s Magazine.

The anecdote of Fitz-James O’Brien walking up and down in front of Harper’s with a sign reading “I am starving” was somewhat symbolic of the era. It was not just that magazine editors were greedily hoarding their earnings; rather, magazines went through many financial struggles of their own, due to high production costs that were often coupled with low circulation. At the time, advertising was not a major source of income relied on by magazines. Some publishers also clung to an old belief that writing was not a profession but a leisure activity for elites. Thus, Frank Mott reports of writer Park Benjamin’s complaints early on in New England Magazine in 1835 that “with the exception of those whom Fortune has placed beyond the necessity of exertion, there are no authors by profession [in America].”

By 1850, there were winds of change in the air. More and more magazinists were winning recognition for their work, the number of professional magazines was growing, and the practice of publishing articles unsigned was gradually giving way to the use of bylines. All of this gave writers more weight than they had previously held, and some magazines responded with better pay. In the 1840s, payment rates were improving, but were still highly varied. The North American Review, for instance, paid a somewhat standard one dollar per page, while The Knickerbocker paid five dollars a page for its best contributions, but virtually nothing for contributions deemed less than its best. Graham’s Magazine had no fixed rate either, but offered between four and twelve dollars per page of prose, with the higher rates going to more famous names. Thus while Longfellow received $50 for one poem and Nathaniel Parker Willis was paid more than enough to live on, Poe received only four or five dollars per page. Ada Clare had a wonderful advantage over many other novice writers of the day: when things worked out so that she received her inheritance, she knew she did not have to depend on her income as a writer to support herself.

And thus, though the cold northern winter was the first Ada had faced, and North’s death cast a bleak light on the delights of New York and the profession of writing, she did not return home. Her cousin Paul Hayne referred to her briefly in a letter to his new friend, the New York writer Richard Stoddard, on New Year’s Day, 1855: “Pray, Stoddard, have you seen a cousin of mine – Miss Ada McElhenney – in your city of late? She has totally abandoned her friends and I would like to know, now and then, something about her …”

If he wanted to find out what Ada was up to in New York, he should have looked around closer to home, as well as querying his literary contacts with New York. He should have read her latest articles in the College Magazine, and carefully observed how they were signed. Ada’s first articles had been signed A.A.M., but her lush love poem “To Thee Alone” published February, 1855, would be signed ADA CLARE. That same February she was making her debut in the Atlas on the New York literary scene, no doubt helped by Anne Lynch, or George William Curtis, or both. By March, 1855, she was struggling with forming a new identity, and writing Julian about how and why Ada Agnes McElhenney was in the process of becoming Ada Clare.
In a letter March 12, 1855, Ada replied to Julian Mitchell’s query about why she had begun calling herself Ada Clare:

Well, I will tell you the truth considering you to be my friend. I am present studying for the stage. It is under that name I will make my appearance, and I now go by that name entirely. I have renounced the other name because my relatives will be pleased … also because my name is too utterly uneuphonious and hideous for the stage. I am so glad to be delivered from it.

She requested that Mitchell not mention this to anyone--she knew it was “rumored about in Charleston” but did not want the “fact” to come from her.

Ada was not just trying out a new stage name. Changing her name was a declaration of independence, the final phase of making a new life. Embarking on a literary career was respectable, but by initiating a stage career, Ada was burning her bridges behind her. With very few exceptions, neither actors nor actresses were received in polite society at that time. No wonder she did not want her new name and new career to be talked about in Charleston.

We know some of what happened to Ada between November, 1854, and March, 1855, that led to her decisions about her future, but we can only speculate about other motivations. Her love poem and New York literary debut “To Thee Alone” began with these lines: “No, ‘tis not fear that binds my heart/Nor do my tears from sorrow flow/’Tis not because I love thee not/Ah! ‘tis because I love thee so!” and ended with a plea to the loved one to let her heart break “on thy bosom…Break sweetly since I love you so!” The Atlas editors commented that “Ada Clare will always find a warm welcome in our columns,” calling her as “eloquent” as the famous ancient Roman lyric poet Catullus, “passionate” and “intellectual.” Because the Atlas was one of the oldest New York Sunday papers, and considered a more serious periodical than many other weeklies like The New York Ledger, The New York Weekly, and the Sunday Mercury, Ada’s literary career in New York was off to a good start. Their acceptance of her writing certainly encouraged Ada to stay in New York.

Certainly love as a subject appeared in her writing because writing with passion about an idealized love was common in the nineteenth century Romantic tradition. But Ada was expressing her own feelings, too. The winter before she left home, she had been in love with love, and Gottschalk, as romantic idol, had been that love’s focus. But in New York City, Ada’s writing about love coincided with a real life relationship. On February 27, 1855, she wrote McCrady, lawyer and family friend in Charleston, to ask “about the settlement of her property” if she married before her twenty-first birthday in July – the date when final settlement of her inheritance would begin. In the midst of composing passionate love poetry full of sensual imagery like “Annabelle’s Dream,” her head was clear enough to be aware that if she married, the legal control of her money would go to her husband.

Meanwhile, word of her “conduct” had gotten back to Charleston. Whether her family feared her making an unsuitable marriage or, a fate worse than death, her going on the stage, by April, 1855, her grandfather Wilson was again holding family conferences about Ada in McCrady’s office. They decided to send her 22-year-old cousin James Hamilton Wilson, to New York to “see about Ada” – certainly to chide her for her conduct, and convince her to return home. Perhaps they thought a family member near her own age would have more success convincing Ada to behave herself.

Ada stayed on in New York, so cousin James must have failed in his mission. And yet she did not marry the man, whoever he was. Was it Ransom the painter? Later that year he moved away from New
York to Boston to make it his new headquarters. Was it rakish writer Fitz-James O’Brien? Six years older than Ada, O’Brien had come to New York in 1852, by way of Dublin and London. Born to wealth and a fine education, O’Brien had all but used up his inheritance by the time Ada knew him, but he was making a name for himself, if not much money, by writing stories and poems for Putnam’s and Harper’s. He was an energetic handsome man with dark hair and blue eyes, whose ability to behave like a gentleman, when he felt like it, made him welcome in the best social circles. Yet like Ada he would enjoy Bohemian circles best.

Despite his charm, he could turn ugly, whether arguing about literature with another writer, or disputing his right-of-way on a busy sidewalk. This led to frequent fisticuffs, at least one night in jail, a broken nose, and the well-earned nickname, “Fists-Gammon O’ Bouncer” given him by the late William North, Ada’s lovesick, impoverished writer friend who took prussic acid. Rumors spread that O’Brien had stolen the idea for one of his most famous stories “The Diamond Lens” and Ada’s heart from North. O’Brien’s name was linked with Ada’s more than any other in gossip, but there are no facts about a romance though they were close friends from early on.

Ada, always so public about her feelings for Gottschalk, kept quiet about the man she almost married in early 1855. Perhaps they broke off because of incompatibility, but more likely she was not ready to give up her newly won autonomy, and future control of her finances. She was already running away from a future as a planter’s wife, isolated on a rural plantation with little chance for intellectual stimulation, or to develop her talents. Perhaps even marriage to someone in New York with similar interests would have been “out of the frying pan – into the fire” as far as her giving up the chance to lead her own life.

One thing is certain. Though her potential spouse’s name is unknown, he must have been from the group of young artists, writers, actors, and political radicals that were now Ada’s friends. They were not from the “upper ten” of polite society, where Ada certainly had entree because of her aristocratic connections. She had chosen new friends who were kindred spirits, men and women who had come to New York as she had seeking freedom of expression in their lifestyles and their arts.

She was very definite in her March, 1855 letter to Julian Mitchell that learning to be an actress took precedence over using her inheritance to take the traditional Grand Tour: “I have an excellent opportunity of going to Europe…I could go to Paris and remain there three years. But I have preferred a life of hard labor to a life of pleasure.”

She confided her hopes for her future to her friend: “I have unfortunately one of those active, restless minds which must have some steady and exciting occupation.” She had a “fierce energy” caused by some “peculiar phases” of her life. This energy would jump out “like a tiger at bay” whenever she tried to lead a “commonplace monotonous life.” She explained “There has long been a terrible struggle between my heart and myself; my heart suffers and so it will not let me rest: I have given way to it and will try to find an active sphere for myself.”

Her head would have told her that her social and financial security depended on going back to Charleston to make a suitable marriage before her reputation was completely ruined by publishing sensual poetry and “dream articles” in the College magazine, followed by a season on the New York stage. Hadn’t she been raised to fulfill herself as well as the expectations of her society as the wife of a cotton planter, and mother of his children?

But her heart would not be denied. In her heart she wanted to search for a different kind of fulfillment for herself, exploring her talents and having friendships with men and women who shared the ideals of the life she wanted to lead. Her relationship with the unknown man in New York as well as other new experiences must have given her a different perspective on love and marriage. Ada Agnes McElhenney in Charleston had craved excitement, intellectual stimulation, and self-expression – Ada Clare in New York could not live without it.

These candid revelations of Ada’s letter to her loyal friend and champion of her writing still revealed her efforts to impress him with how busy her life was. She wrote that he was “indebted to the elements” for her letter – she had an “engagement to go out that evening” but stormy weather kept her from going. Did he still plan to do post-graduate work in Germany after his college graduation in Spring, 1855, as he had written? If he did, “you will have to pass through New York, and then I hope I will see you.” She certainly wished to see him again, even if she did not return to Charleston. Her future plans were to make
her stage debut in the Fall of 1855, if she was “ready.” She was “at present a very hard student, having some remarkable difficulties in voice to overcome.”

Ada’s first step toward a stage career was to work with a teacher. She was fortunate to study with Clara Fisher Maeder, a distinguished actress from England and a great favorite in America. Maeder’s ad in the paper looking for students coincided with Ada’s search for a teacher – and turned up fourteen other pupils along with Ada.

Maeder later remembered that nearly all her pupils were successful, but she considered Ada Clare her most notable failure even though Ada was “most persistent” and eager to learn. “She was so desirous of going on the stage, was very pretty and bright, and had so excellent an education” that Maeder “tried hard to succeed with her,” but Clare could not learn how to act. Ada’s weak voice, noted by herself and later by critics, was probably her biggest disadvantage. Friends of Ada praised her “quiet, high-bred tone of voice,” but it could hardly be heard past the first few rows of the huge New York theaters with audience capacities of 2000 to 4000 people and uncertain acoustics.

These large theaters also had limited stage lighting, and actors had to use a broad acting style with large gestures so they could be seen. Maeder insisted that her students “not attempt acting until each one could read well enough to convey the meaning of the words” without gestures. She tried to develop not just the actors’ voices, but their ability to project a character before adding movement and gestures. According to her friends William Winter and Walt Whitman, impartial observers like William Dean Howells, and even some of her enemies, Ada had a charismatic personality offstage, but onstage, she seemed to be unable to use the dramatic aspects of her personality to project the roles she played.

Few players of the day had acting lessons – they learned their craft onstage with only the stage manager to give them training of sorts. How well this worked is illustrated by an anecdote of Maeder’s about a student she coached who had already been onstage. The woman asked Maeder “what she acted on.” Maeder asked what she meant. “I mean what stimulant do you require?” Maeder answered, “None but my own good spirits, and pray never think of any other.” Her student replied, “Oh, our stage manager makes us take a little whiskey and gunpowder before we go onstage!”

Edward “Ned” Wilkins, talented drama critic and playwright, later one of Ada’s court circle of Bohemians at Pfaff’s, wrote a witty account of how female actresses broke into show business. After a young lady takes a few acting lessons, “managers are besieged by her friends and admirers until the desired ‘appearance’ is arranged. Critics are requested to ‘let the lady up lightly – she’s only a woman, you know.’ He wrote that invariably the newcomer would choose a part like Julia in The Hunchback that even experienced actresses “approach with fear and trembling.” Though “[o]n opening night the debutante will have plenty of applause – her friends are in the audience,” Wilkins did not foresee a bright future for the young lady. She might have to find subsequent engagements far away in “Peoria,” even then considered “the sticks.”

Ada did choose the role of Julia for her debut on August 15, 1855, at Wallack’s theater. The August 5, 1855 Atlas theater column announced the forthcoming production of The Hunchback by amateurs with “Miss Ada Clare who has volunteered.” The role ironically parallels one aspect of Ada’s life at the time; Julia, like Ada, is a country girl dazzled by exciting life in the big city. In the end of the play, however, Julia decides not to throw over her small town lover to marry a big city rich man while Ada was in love with life in the big city, No lover could lure her from the path of preserving her autonomy and developing her talents.

The critics were not thrilled with Ada’s performance. On August 19, the Atlas reviewer said the performance was “respectable,” but added that he didn’t expect much, especially from amateurs. Ada had joined a group of young men and women amateurs, mostly journalists, with a few artists and lawyers too. They pooled their money and rented a theater for their first performance. This time they had rented Wallack’s at Broome Street and Broadway, one of the leading legitimate theaters in New York during the season.

One of the three men in the cast who billed themselves jointly as “talented writers” was William Bennett, who would soon take his pen name Zavarr Wilmshurst as his legal name. He was on the Atlas staff, would become Ada’s lifelong friend, and might have served as Ada’s introduction to this group. Ten years older than Ada, Wilmshurst had been trained as a minister in England, but was also a writer, and part
of the notorious Countess of Blessington’s group. A writer, friend of Byron, and mistress of the flamboyant Count d’Orsay, the Countess hosted an ongoing salon that brought together those living out the ideals of Romanticism to the hilt.115

Wilmshurst eventually drifted to America, where he would scratch out a living, often by writing for several papers at a time. He also had ambitions for the stage when he and Ada met, so they had much in common. He fell in love with her, and often wrote poems about her (typical was “The Beautiful Blonde from the South”) that were published in the *Atlas*.

Ada wrote Mitchell on September 1, 1855, about her debut two weeks before: “… some of the papers spoke very highly, others abused me very much. On the whole, I create a great sensation.” She also mentioned she was the “business man of the party, and do all the managing,” and that the next week the players would go on tour to Newark, New Jersey.

Ada’s cousin Paul Hayne heard that her debut was less than sensational and wrote Richard H. Stoddard, his writer friend in New York, that he was glad her father had not lived to see the day she appeared on stage. Yet even as he denied interest in Ada, he pressed for details about what exactly was wrong with Ada’s acting. He wanted to know if she had stage fright, or if it was “a total breakdown … she is nothing to me now, but I feel for anyone in so shocking a position. If you can procure any critique upon her debut let me have it, and you will be conferring a favor upon all of us.” Perhaps her family hoped Ada’s failure as an actress would bring her home at last.116

But however much Ada’s family hoped she would give up her ideas about a stage career, Ada persevered. She had chosen an opportune time to enter the New York theater world—the tremendous expansion of New York theater which was in place by the early 1850s created a demand for more actors and actresses, however unskilled. The most important urban center of trade, commerce, and manufacturing had also become the national theater center of America and new audiences beyond the established elites called for theatrical entertainment.117 As more theaters were built to serve these audiences, it was no longer necessary for each to present a variety of plays and other entertainments to please all tastes. It became possible and profitable for more theaters to concentrate on what would be later called “legitimate theater”. There was something in legitimate theater for everyone. Working class theatergoers could find entertainment with cheaper ticket prices in Bowery neighborhood theaters, and there were even foreign language performances for recently arrived European immigrants. However it was the support of theater by the growing middle-class that made the rapid growth of theater possible. Other theatrical entertainments would have their own locations ranging from opera houses, to more popular fare like minstrel shows, circuses, and summer gardens that offered concerts and light entertainment.

Stimulated and distracted by the cultural feast available, no wonder Ada had written Julian Mitchell on September 25, 1854, “I adore places of amusement and am always to be found at the theatre or the opera. I do not read so much as I used to do, there is so much to interest me here, I live so fast that I cannot find the calmness necessary for steady reading.”

Around 1850 the majority of theater as well as other cultural activities catering to the rapidly growing middle and upper class audiences began to be centered in one ten-block area of Manhattan with Broadway as its center. The newest hotels were located there, and began to advertise their proximity to theaters as a selling point. Broadway became the focus of opportunity for actors and actresses, managers, and playwrights as theater entrepreneurs mounted new productions and built new theaters or enlarged older ones. Ada was part of the crowds of people of all kinds thronging Broadway day and night.118 Broadway had the advantage of being paved and well-lighted. It was convenient to dependable public transportation. There were already a few successful theaters there, and more continued to be built. The overwhelming popularity of so many minstrel shows concentrated there from the 1840s to the 1860s had already drawn crowds, and familiarized the public with the location.

The amateur group that Ada belonged to had chosen one of the most prominent of the Broadway theaters for their debut-- the huge Wallack’s Lyceum Theater located at the corner of Broome and Broadway. The amateurs probably hoped Wallack’s popularity and handy location would draw attention to the productions they staged while the theater was closed until the professional season started in the Fall.

Within the theatrical explosion of the time, Ada Clare’s interest in becoming an actress was undoubtedly first sparked by what theater offered a woman in terms of self-realization. Ada described the
personal opportunities that actresses had always had to live a more expressive life in the *New York Leader*, March 15, 1862. She believed that only on stage was a woman “out of her straight jacket, and allowed the free uses of her limbs and soul. The actress may put away convention, cant, and hypocrisy” using to the fullest extent, “her beauty, her talent, her instincts, her vocal power, her grace and her sensations.” The actress did not have to live out her life according to society’s dictates that the only worthwhile life for a woman was as wife and mother. Becoming an actress would offer Ada the “active sphere” she described seeking in her March, 1855 letter to Julian Mitchell.

Certainly, an acting career offered a woman the possibility of financial independence when there were few other options for work that might pay as well. For example, the legendary American actress Charlotte Cushman turned to acting to support herself and her family when her merchant father went bankrupt and her mother’s boarding house and Cushman’s own work as a housemaid yielded little income. There was even more profit in becoming an actress-manager.

Laura Keene’s career is an example. Keene (1826-1873) was a successful actress who later became the most prominent and financially successful actress manager of her time. Born in England, Keene originally started acting to support herself and two children after her husband deserted her. After apprenticing with the legendary Madame Vestris’s company in London, she headed for New York. By 1852 Keene was quite popular as a rising star in James W. Wallack’s company. But even then she had her eye on the profits possible in a management career, as did many other actresses at mid-century. Keene must have noticed that as the same time she was paid $45 a week as an actress, James W. Wallack had made a profit of $9000 for his season. She tried managing unsuccessfully in Baltimore, and then as star and manager toured to California and Australia.

Ultimately, Keene returned to New York where she operated her own playhouse successfully from 1855 to 1863 in what was the largest and most competitive theater market in America. She needed money to do this, and managed to get financing from a group of gamblers, including her later long time companion, John Lutz. Though later theater would become a bigger business where one woman alone, might not be able to raise capital, the 1850s still offered women that opportunity. Since Ada had written Mitchell on September 1, 1855 that “she was the business man…and [did] all the managing” of the amateurs, Ada had the makings of an actress-manager at the earliest stage of her career.

Beginning in the 1840s managers began to make changes in the legitimate theater that drew more middle-class women into the audience, and eventually those women would exert influence on what dramatic fare was offered. When audiences began to become more segmented, legitimate theaters had to compete with other entertainments that could offer cheaper prices. A financial depression did not help matters. New York managers had to make an effort to attract the growing genteel moneyed middle-class theater audience. The key was to appeal more to the women, those “angels in the house,” traditionally in charge of family morality and cultural education. Some “respectable” women had always attended theater, even though the clergy had traditionally preached against the immorality of the theater. New York was more open than Boston in ignoring some of this, but the theater had become associated with some sleazy elements.

At one time, prostitutes openly sought clients inside the “third tier”, the uppermost balcony of the theater. As early as 1848, the Park Theater tried to turn the third tier into a “family circle”, but managers eventually got rid of that uppermost tier and also closed theater bars, since alcohol was considered to foster drunkenness and immorality. Theaters made rules that in the evening, women could only be admitted with male escorts. Theater security guards were trained to spot prostitutes and remove them. Security men also removed those who were noisy and unruly during the play; managers were aiming for attentive audiences who observed drawing room decorum to feel at home in the theater.

Theater managers scheduled matinee performances to encourage middle class women in particular to come alone or in groups to the theater. Theater spaces were cleaned up and furnished with more comfortable seating. By the 1850s women made up half of the audience at the predominately middle-class theaters in the Broadway theater district. As women became a larger part of the audience, they rewarded, with interest and attendance, plays written with the female point of view, addressing women’s concerns, thus creating a demand for more of these plays and more actresses.
So Ada’s choice to seek an acting career, and her first attempts at public performance were not totally foolhardy. She was in the right place, New York City, at the right time to make a good start. And the fact that Laura Keene hired her for Keene’s first-rate company in Spring, 1856 only 8 months after her amateur debut proves that Ada had something to offer, despite her teacher’s disappointment in her skills.

After her mid-August debut, Ada went to the Green Street Theater in Albany, New York to try to improve her acting by getting more experience. She asked for a chance to join the company on trial, and appeared briefly with them. Rose Eytinge, the younger sister of Sol Eytinge who was the mentor of cartoonist Thomas Nast (all three to later become members of the Pfaff’s Bohemian circle), was then a hard-working novice with the company, and remembered Ada well. Ada selected the role of Virginie in a forgettable farce, *The Pet of the Petticoats*, that was probably pirated from the French stage, as so many plays were. Eytinge remembered hearing that Ada chose it “because it was a French dialect part.” Before she even met Ada, the other company members teased Eytinge that her “reign” as favorite ingenue was over. Ada the “new girl” was prettier than her, with “golden hair,” and “clever” too. That night she saw Ada Clare “who was all and more than they had said…how beautiful she was!” She said she had worshipped Ada Clare from that day on. Eytinge would be a regular at Ada’s Sunday evenings on 42nd Street.

Ada returned to New York more confident in her acting abilities, even though she was not offered a permanent place in the Green Street company in Albany. She would always enjoy attending theater performances, and September 3, 1855, she and the rest of New York were enthralled by the American debut of the world-famous French tragic actress Rachel at the Metropolitan Theater. Ada probably joined the “strong-minded ladies of the press” reported by the *Atlas* to be watching Rachel’s performances with “texts of the play in hand.”

Rachel played the classic French roles Phedre and Andromache in French. Her performance moved Ada so much, she wrote Mitchell: “In moments of intense passion, the rolling out of her voice would stir the dead in their graves … She has passed over my soul like a great tempest.” Many agreed with Ada. The *Albion* reviewed Rachel on September 8, 1855: “So deep, vibrant and magnetic were the first tones of that voice that they sent a thrill through the vast assembly, a thrill which at once opened the communication between the genius of Rachel and her new hearers.”

Ada’s comments on Rachel and her own debut appeared in her last surviving letter to Mitchell on September 4, 1855. In his preceding letter, he had been angry with her for not writing him, but she insisted she had written, but addressed her letter simply to his name and “Charleston,” because she had forgotten his address. Perhaps her letter was lost – but this sounds like a bad excuse.

Her letter to her friend had an impatient tone, and yet she did ask for his daguerreotype to be “a pleasing remembrance of our former friendship.” (She never sent the one she promised him.) Their lives were changing. The *College* magazine expired from lack of funds. Mitchell had graduated with honors, and planned to study in Europe at some future date. She asked him to write her at her new address – the Union Place Hotel at Broadway and 19th Street, a fashionable family hotel built in 1850. Like the Astor Place and the St. Nicholas Hotels of the same era, it held all the necessities and luxuries of life; the food and furnishings were lavish. European visitors wrote that these hotels were like “cities within a city.”

Everything of interest to Ada could be found south of Union Square on Broadway or nearby. North of Union Square was still an elite residential neighborhood, but south of Union Square, the well-to-do were beginning to sell their houses along Broadway and moving uptown, and more and more businesses moved in. By 1854, *Putnam’s Monthly* declared Broadway “altogether the most showy, the most crowded, and the richest thoroughfare in America.” Fashionable department stores like A.T. Stewart at Broadway and Chambers marked the beginning of the “Lady’s Mile” of department stores, and shops of all kinds attracted elegantly dressed ladies like Ada, who had plenty of money to spend. They window-shopped as they ambled along, and then went into one store after another to do their serious shopping.

Ada’s new address kept her in the thick of the theatrical district and she returned to the amateur group, joining their preparations for some special performances in November. On November 16, 1855, Ada starred with William Ware in a condensed version of *The Wife* by Sheridan Knowles. The twin bill included Zavarr Wilmshurst co-starring in his own creation, *Love and Revenge*, a knockabout farce. Ada was likely responsible for the advance publicity in the *Atlas* noting that her August debut had been a “sensation:” she was “young and beautiful,” had “recently appeared in Albany, and “had conquered her initial nervousness.”
However, the *Atlas* reviewer “Theatrical Matters,” (probably Thaddeus Meighan, one of the amateur actors himself) singled out Ada as having “talent of the highest order.” Ada’s co-star William Ware rushed into the dressing-room after the last act, and seized her hands saying: “Ada, you were the sweetest little wife I ever saw.”

The onlooker who remembered this was Marie Howland (1836-1921) writer, teacher, and follower of Fourier. Howland met Ada in the amateur group, and would become one of her most important lifelong friends. She would become like a sister to Ada, offering her emotional support, and a sanctuary in her home for Ada and her son Aubrey in later years. They were both “New Women” though they had grown into their roles through vastly different experiences. Even Howland’s dark, handsome, and plump physical appearance contrasted sharply with Ada’s blonde, petite persona.

Born Hannah Marie Stevens to a struggling farm family with many children in Lebanon, New Hampshire, she moved around with her mother and some of her siblings after her father’s death as they sought factory work. The family members helped each other throughout their lives, and Howland took special responsibility for twin sisters Ada and Meg, seven years younger.

Howland always loved books even after she had to leave school to work. She eventually joined other women workers at the Lowell, Massachusetts textile manufacturing mills. Even though working hours were long and there were labor disputes over salary, a tradition existed of women attending lectures and trying to educate themselves, and even having an opportunity to have their writing published in *The Lowell Offering* through the efforts of Harriet Farley. Howland dropped her first name Hannah when she published her first writing in local papers.

Howland developed her writing skills, saved money for herself after providing for her sisters, and then spent time in Boston learning Pitman shorthand. By nineteen, she was in New York City, barely scraping along addressing mailing wrappers while she finished her education in night school. When Ada met Howland, she was teaching at Five Points Mission, in one of the city’s dreariest, roughest neighborhoods, and completing her certificate at night school to become a school principal in 1855. Howland’s debut with the amateur theater group was in *The Rough Diamond* — a perfect description of herself at that time.

Howland shared quarters in a boarding house on Bleecker Street, off Broadway in Greenwich Village with two other “New Women” who would become Ada’s good friends. One was Anna Ballard, (1828-1923) singer, music educator, missionary and writer, born in Massachusetts, who had received a good education when she went with her sister to the frontier town of Quincy, Illinois to a missionary training institute. The success of Ballard’s beautiful singing voice led her to come to New York to seek training for opera. She supported herself by working at the Five Points Mission School.

The third roommate called herself Getty Gay after her *Atlas* byline. Like Ada, she was a pretty blonde. Getty Gay, born Gertrude Louise Vultee, (1840?-1860) was a drop-out from a prominent family. Gay wrote columns notable for their satirical humor for the *Atlas* early on. Ada did not do that kind of writing until later, perhaps influenced by Gay. Ada and Gay were often described as being “spirituelle” – a term used then to describe women who combined a “highly refined nature” with “liveliness or quickness of mind.”

Many of the amateur actors were also interested in progressive social movements, and against the establishment in one way or another. One member of the group, Edward F. Underhill (one of the three “writers of the press” debuting with Ada that August) probably introduced Ada and Howland to activities at The Club at 555 Broadway, upstairs from popular Taylor’s restaurant. Underhill had been a factory worker like Howland before he became a journalist, and The Club was founded by Stephen Pearl Andrews to pursue “The Grand Order of Recreation,” part of a new scheme for “Grand Orders” of a new kind of society inspired by the writings of French social scientist and reformer Francois Charles Fourier.

Fourier identified “the great crisis of the age as the failure of men and women to find satisfaction in their work and their emotional relationships.” He advocated a system that would bring harmonious balance between the organic and the inorganic, man and his world, and man and God for example. In order to promote new values, relationships between the sexes, modes of work, and other changes he developed a new social unit he called the “phalansterie.” He believed in changing society through sharing a new version of communal life and had founded successful communities following these principles in France.
In New England, Brook Farm eventually became a Fourieristic community, along with other “phalanxes,” such as one at Red Bank, New Jersey and one called “Modern Times” on Long Island. Many of Ada’s friends visited or lived in these communities at various times where people lived and worked together sharing profits, their social and cultural lives, and sometimes even their sexual lives.

The Club at 555 Broadway was a space where members, or those who were introduced by a member, paid a dime to come in, and then could waltz, play chess, backgammon, or cards, take French lessons, or join lively discussions of new ideas including feminism. There were educational lectures about Fourier’s philosophy and there was even an interest in amateur theatricals, Underhill providing the liaison with his own amateur group. It was open twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays. Jane Croly, a pioneering woman journalist whose byline was “Jennie June,” was mistress of ceremonies and greeted everyone. She wrote what was probably the first “women’s department” in a newspaper in 1855, was an advocate of feminism, and would later found Sorosis, the first woman’s club in America.

Ada and Howland not only learned new ideas through The Club, but made friendships that would greatly influence their lives. Howland met her future husband there, the wealthy radical lawyer Lyman Case. After their marriage they would join Edward F. Underhill and other Fourierists to form a group that lived communally in what the Press would come to call a “Brownstone Utopia.”

Stephen Pearl Andrews was quite impressed with Ada, calling her “a spark of the divine fire, the oversoul.” But the developing friendship that would be the most important to her future life was with Henry Clapp, Jr. In his early 40s, wiry, bearded, with mischievous blue eyes and a caustic wit, he had studied, traveled, and lived his life continually battling for his beliefs. Born in New England, Clapp had written about and advocated for the temperance and abolitionist causes. He had just returned from Paris where he lived among artists and writers on the Left Bank who struggled to make a living while they rebelled against the prosperous middle class and their ideas. Henri Murger was the first to call these artists and writers “Bohemians” in his autobiographical tales of Left Bank life published in Paris in 1844. Clapp thought it might be a good idea to have a “Bohemian” in New York – and in what better place than Greenwich Village? He had studied Fourier’s theories in Paris, and after returning to New York became Albert Brisbane’s secretary and translated Fourier’s Social Destiny of Man into English, later published with Brisbane’s own writing. Brisbane introduced Clapp to The Club.

Among their other progressive ideas, Fourierists believed that men and women should stay together because of “passional attraction,” not because religious and civil marriage vows bound them. This certainly appealed to women like Ada and Howland, already advocates of feminism, and influenced their later sexual behavior. As Paul Gaston wrote about this idea’s influence on Howland’s life in Women of Fair Hope:

… free love stood as the antithesis of slave love: it meant that women should be liberated from male domination, free to form marriage on the basis of love, dissolve it in the absence of love, and offer or withhold their bodies on their own terms.

These ideas about new kinds of relationships and new roles for women were controversial. Some members of the press, especially the Tribune, created a scandal when they accused the Fourierists of using The Club’s lectures to spread the ideas of “free love,” and the place became notorious. Nevertheless a reporter from the Times visited and observed first-hand that “no misconduct in public” was tolerated or intended by those who had founded The Club. The article said that all activities were related to Fourier’s philosophy, including whether or not The Club endorsed “free love.” The reporter satirically described the “free love women” as “large waisted and strong-minded” and observed that they generally beat the men at bridge and chess. On a more serious note, the reporter thought that though there was a danger to society of “free love” breaking the marital bonds, it did give women the perfect right to control their persons, property, and affections.

The sensational writing of some members of the press did not cease, however – the Tribune continued to push the claim that all Fourierists believed in Free Love--physical love without marriage vows-- and Tammany Hall spread word that the Fourierists were sowing the seeds of political unrest. Underlying the suspicions about The Club promoting “free love,” was the notion that the kind of liberated woman found there was no better than a prostitute. On October 18, 1855 the police organized a raid on the premises.
Fascinated crowds watched on the sidewalk as the police dragged everyone down the stairs, and hauled the manager away to jail for the night. The Club was temporarily shut down, and the manager, Benjamin Henderson, and three other members were brought before the court.

Clapp made an impassioned defense of The Club during the scandalous trial that followed. The case against it was finally dismissed on October 24, but Clapp was already looking for another place along Broadway in Greenwich Village that might become the equivalent of Cafe Momus in Paris—a place that would serve as a meeting-place for New York’s own Bohemians. A place where good food and wine would accompany good talk. A place for exchanging ideas about politics as well as books, art, and theater. A place where people could read aloud their latest poem, or part of a play. And finally a place where kindred spirits could meet and enjoy themselves without harassment.

Clapp would find a welcome for his Bohemian group at Charlie Pfaff’s restaurant at 647 Broadway. Downstairs in the smoky beer cellar, Pfaff would reserve a long table in an alcove under the Broadway pavement where the Bohemians could hear the footsteps of pedestrians overhead, as they enjoyed stimulating talk along with excellent German style cooking and good wine. In 1855, however, Ada never dreamed that Clapp would someday share the head of the table at Pfaff’s with her, and become her literary mentor. The heyday of Bohemia as well as the debut of the *Saturday Press* with her own column would not come until several years later.

In late November, 1855, Ada was only thinking about rehearsing her role as Ophelia in *Hamlet*. The amateurs leased the huge, new Academy of Music for their most ambitious production on November 27. Of course, half of their lines were lost in the immense space. On December 2, the *Atlas* reviewer showed them no mercy even though he knew them all well. He suggested that they should stick to their other jobs of “The Press and The Bar.” Ada’s performance in the plum role of Ophelia was only graded “passable.” The reviewer wrote that most of the group could only act as well as “third-rate stock players.”

During this same period, Ada’s New York lawyers Clarence and John Mitchell were corresponding with lawyer Edward McCrady of Charleston as they finalized the disposition of Ada’s share of her inheritance. In late November, 1855, McCrady sent Clarence Mitchell a check for Ada with some legal papers but also asked him whether Ada was ready to return to Charleston. Clarence Mitchell replied December 1st about the legal matters, adding: “I do not think Miss McElhenney would be willing to return to Charleston, at least at present. I will however sound her out on the subject at the first opportunity. She seems much occupied with her profession, but at times seems to me not fully satisfied with her choice.” It seems likely her mostly negative reviews had discouraged Ada. But would she return home?

After seeing Ada over the holidays, Clarence Mitchell wrote Edward McCrady on January 3, 1856, making further arrangements for all of Ada’s legal documents and accounts to be moved to New York. He ended his letter: “Miss Ada, I regret to say, expresses no desire to return to Charleston which you suggest would be so acceptable to her friends.” The reference to Ada’s friends evokes Julian Mitchell, certainly her closest friend in Charleston, waiting for word about whether Ada was coming home or not. Surely by this time friends and family in Charleston must have realized that Ada might not come home at all. Perhaps they could not understand how much New York was home to her now, and even her New York lawyer seems behind the times in calling her Miss McElhenney.

With her mixed reviews, Ada’s theatrical career did not seem promising, yet by early Spring, 1856, Laura Keene had hired Ada as ingénue for her highly successful New York company. Keene was now having her first successful season with her own company and theater in New York, the beginning of her distinguished career in the American theater. She would also develop many famous players in her company – joining her company was a wonderful chance for Ada.

Ada’s amateur appearances may have only been notable for her beauty and exquisite wardrobe, an important consideration in the days when actresses had to furnish their own costumes. However, she must have looked appealing to Keene, scouting for new talent. She fit well into Keene’s elaborate productions. Keene especially needed her in early 1856 for important small roles when she was mounting new productions to attract larger audiences. During the spring season of 1856, Keene gave Ada many opportunities to be onstage. Ada’s star was rising and she acquitted herself well in this first season.

About this time, a Brooklyn journalist and poet, newly acquainted with Ada, wrote an article, “Street Yarn,” about well-known New Yorkers seen strolling down Broadway. The journalist and poet was Walt
Whitman. Though he lived in Brooklyn, Whitman himself could often be found on Broadway observing the immense variety of the rushing waves of humanity there. A tall, robust man, he was usually dressed in casual attire with high boots over his pants, a jacket of heavy dark blue cloth left open to show a woolen undershirt, a broad brimmed hat and a red neckerchief. Whitman had published the first edition of his most famous work *Leaves of Grass*, in early July, 1855, in what Jerome Loving calls “the central literary event of the nineteenth century.”144 Prior to that, he had had a varied career as a printer, itinerant schoolteacher, and writer and editor for myriad newspapers and journals. Though the first edition *Leaves of Grass* with its earthy, sensual images and subjects written in free verse provoked mostly controversy and almost no literary acclaim,145 with its publication, Whitman was on the road, though it was to be a long and hard one, to becoming a giant of American Literature.

In “Street Yarn”, he described Ada along with such prominent figures as William Cullen Bryant, poet and editor; Charles Dana, Jr., at that time managing editor of the *Tribune*, and Robert Bonner, editor of the sensational weekly newspaper *The Ledger*, as well as a few ordinary unnamed types like a prostitute and a gambler:

A lady – slender and elegant – in black from head to foot; pure white complexion, pale, striking chiseled features, perfect profile, abundant fair hair; abstracted look, and rather rapid, purposeful step. That is Miss Ada Clare, called by many a perfect beauty; unquestionless of decided talent; one about whom many interesting stories might be told, and a persevering and energetic votary of the mimetic art. Possessed of some wealth, great personal attractions, no inconsiderable share of intellect and cultivation, she has already often appeared upon the stage which she may possibly adopt as a profession.146

Whitman’s knowledge of Ada showed that they were at least friendly acquaintances at that point, and ultimately they were friends for many years. Perhaps some of the “interesting stories” Whitman had heard were about her relationship with Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Gottschalk, too, was a rising star and in time Ada would reveal that he was the man she swore she loved more than any other man in her life. Ada and Gottschalk were destined to meet again, and because of their relationship, her star would suffer a temporary eclipse.
CHAPTER 4: ENTER GOTTSCHALK – EXIT A FALLEN WOMAN

When Ada was beginning her professional theatrical career in early 1856, pianist – composer Gottschalk was delighting standing-room-only concert audiences in New York City. Known to his family as Moreau, he was born an American citizen in New Orleans in 1829, but his background and education made French his preferred language. His mother Aimee Brusle Gottschalk, from a Catholic and French background, was the daughter of a New Orleans businessman. Gottschalk’s grandparents had fled their plantation on the island of Haiti during a slave uprising. His father Edward Gottschalk, Sr., was a Jewish businessman born in London. Though Edward Gottschalk, Sr., maintained a few ties to the New Orleans Jewish community, his wife raised the seven Gottschalk children as Roman Catholics. Louis Moreau’s devoted, ambitious parents sent him to Paris in 1841 when he was 12 to study piano and composition, and also acquire the education of a young aristocrat, learning Latin, Greek, the modern classics, fencing and riding. Gottschalk was also an intellectual, very interested in politics, and an accomplished writer in English as well as French.

His seemingly charmed life and highly successful musical career was interrupted by the untimely death of his father and the huge debts this subsequently revealed. Despite his own large debts, Gottschalk assumed the burden of caring for his mother and six brothers and sisters. Aimee Gottschalk had moved them all to Paris so the other children would have a musical education equal to Gottschalk’s, though none of them had his musical talent. His mother tried to do her share to support the family by opening a pension in Paris, but it remained for Gottschalk to spend most of his of life keeping up heavy schedules of concerts and teaching to stay ahead of their never-ending debts, often neglecting his great gift of composition.

Women found him extremely attractive, whether the well-dressed matrons that flocked to his concerts or the young ladies in schoolrooms who required piano instruction. Gottschalk’s effect on the ladies helped sell his sheet music and attract concert audiences–his numerous dedications to women (almost always society women) on his compositions might have more to do with public relations than passion.

But passion was also present. His appreciation of them is manifest in diary descriptions of “an amiable audience warm, intelligent, elegant, the majority composed of young girls whose charming faces are made to turn the heads of pianists,” and “the most charming types of young women that ever crossed the dreams of an old bachelor, and this is the element I dread the most in my concerts – it gives me absence of mind, and a wrong note is very quickly struck!”

South American writers Luis Fors and Francisco Lange have written about Gottschalk’s Latin-American amours. He was said to frequent the hang-out of Rio de Janeiro’s fast young crowd, where the men went to meet beautiful ballerinas. An American contemporary of his from South Carolina, prima donna Clara Louise Kellogg would remember him as a “gay deceiver” adored by women. She overheard Gottschalk and his great friend, the famous tenor Brignoli, comparing love letters written to them by “matinée girls” begging for an assignation. Gottschalk once bet Brignoli that he could get any woman to meet him any place however outlandish. He managed to get a young woman to meet him at a ferryboat landing, so easily won the bet.

Nowhere in any of Gottschalk’s surviving writing does he mention a serious love affair with Ada Clare. Did he omit this evidence because he was discreet and a gentleman? Did his early biographer and friend Fors, the South American journalist, invent Gottschalk’s reputation as a Casanova? Did Gottschalk’s sisters, inheritors of his papers, destroy evidence of his loves in his letters and diaries? Perhaps time and other circumstances have taken a toll on the evidence.

What evidence remains about Ada and Gottschalk’s love affair and his subsequent rejection of her, is her writing about it in her columns in the Atlas from November, 1856 until early January, 1857 and the
recollections of her contemporaries. She also fictionalized aspects of the affair in her novel *Only a Woman’s Heart* published in 1866. There was plenty of contemporary conjecture and gossip about the Ada-Gottschalk affair and whether or not Gottschalk was the father of Ada’s son Aubrey, whose exact birth date is unknown. Marie Howland’s comments are the most reliable and appear later in this chapter. Other comments by Henry Clapp, Jr., Ada’s friend and mentor; Charles Warren Stoddard, the poet, who was friend, and traveling companion to Ada and Aubrey in Hawaii in 1864; Ada’s cousin Paul Hayne; and his son William Hayne are dealt with elsewhere.

Since few hard facts about the love affair and its aftermath can be found, I have tried to reconstruct what might have occurred, keeping in mind the existing facts, the conditions of Ada and Gottschalk’s lives, and their very different ideas about the roles of a man and a woman in life and in love.

Ada and Gottschalk probably became better acquainted after he returned to New York in 1855, because they traveled in the same circles and had mutual friends, including Henry Clapp, Jr., who had a long friendship with the musician. They probably first met at Annie Lynch’s salon since as Ada had noted in a letter to Julian Mitchell, September 25, 1854, “All the *literati*, musicians, and distinguished foreigners in the city are always to be found there.” Nathaniel Willis, the editor of the *Home Journal* and dandified man about town, was an early friend of Gottschalk who showed him around New York, and Willis was a regular at “Lynchie’s” salon.

The Gottschalk scholar Robert Offergeld wrote of the long friendship between Willis and Gottschalk, and suggested that Gottschalk’s cordial welcome by the male intellectual lights of New York’s upper class society “must have given him a deeper satisfaction than the permanent flurry he caused among the ladies.” If so, he was true to the customs of his European-influenced upbringing in New Orleans where men found true companionship and intellectual stimulation with other men. Women were supposed to fit neatly into categories of either wife or mistress, and Ada would never comfortably fit either.

In their 1856 New York City reunion, Ada would have found it easy to return to the mode of adoration even if she had forgotten her earlier crush on Gottschalk. The women of America were going wild over him. An eyewitness remembered: “Women…were fascinated by his playing and charming personality…they used to mob the entrance to the stage door…struggling to shake hands with him, entering his carriage, some following it to his hotel, remaining in the parlor until he reappeared.”

Why would he have noticed Ada more than any of the other women who idolized him or the schoolgirls whose faces distracted him at concerts? There were many things about Ada that were more than ordinarily attractive. Gottschalk may have been the first matinee’ idol, but Ada was bright, witty, and talented as well. Her beauty was cleverly showcased in the beautiful tableaux Laura Keene created onstage such as the opening “Dream Scene” of the play *The Marble Heart*, with Ada playing Phryne, a famous courtesan of the ancient world posing for the sculptor Phidias. Completing the sensual setting, the chorus sang “In Bacchanal and Wild Orgie.”

The play traced the progress of a beautiful but selfish woman searching for wealth and power, showing her reappearance in different societies from ancient to modern times. Its theme was in line with what Keene, who kept an astute eye on what kind of plays boosted box office receipts, decided audiences most wanted to see. As Ben Graf Henneke suggests in his biography of Keene, it was “a play in which the audience could hear the worst about a woman but need not admit it to be true…They wanted to hear about the same scarlet sins they dreamed. …but since they praised virtue and chastity …they didn’t want those other sinners. …to go away unpunished.”

It was one of Keene’s biggest hits of the season. *Leslie’s* described “the brilliant and fashionable audience” attending. If Gottschalk was not present, surely others spread the word of Ada’s attractions. When the musician met Ada in person, he may have been intrigued by Ada’s combination of beauty, wit and independence as so many other men and women were. He knew of her as a “literary lady” offhandedly mentioning her as such in his diary.

Ada was not only “literary” but an independent woman too. Gottschalk commented in his diary on Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, who popularized the Bloomer costume of a dress over voluminous trousers and championed women’s rights: “I do not believe in women who assert their rights. I shall be converted when I meet one who is young and pretty. All those I have yet seen are perfect frights.” Ada was a young and
pretty believer in women’s rights, and whether or not she converted him to her beliefs, he may have found her combination of independence and beauty diverting at first.

Ada may have seized Gottschalk’s attention by pursuing him. As Marie Howland recalled: “Ada was crazily enamored of him, as all her friends knew...her main business in life at that time was running after Gottschalk.” Howland saw the obsessive quality of Ada’s interest. She may have known the whole story, though she never revealed all of it, and later wrote, “The true heart-history of Ada Clare may never be known by anyone.”

Howland observed Ada’s love affair from its beginning. She knew of Ada’s heartbreak after Gottschalk’s rejection, and probably knew when and where her son Aubrey was born. After 1866, Ada and Aubrey would spend their summers with her and Edward Howland, joined by J. Frank Noyes after his 1868 marriage to Ada. Howland mentions “frequent talks about Gottschalk” over this long period of years when Ada “said nothing to deny that Gottschalk was the father of Aubrey.” She also said Ada was “a woman of sentiment and refinement” who would have only had a love affair with a man she knew well and really loved.

From the beginning of their affair, Ada, a strong-minded woman living beyond the traditional “women’s sphere,” was on a collision course with Gottschalk’s very conventional ideas of perfect womanhood. He had much to say in his diary about what he did and did not admire about women, especially American women. The musician considered American women superior to European women in beauty as well as education, but thought this important for one purpose only. “American women with their delicate sentiments and the intelligence that our system of education develops, united to the native elegance of their sex, will do more than all the legislators in the world to polish men.” He believed that the American woman must civilize her man in America’s turmoil, “the turbulent effervescence found at the surface of all new societies. Without the influence of women, “whiskey and the revolver would completely overrun us.”

Gottschalk’s diary entries during the Civil War reveal that he thought women possessed neither the deepest range of feeling nor the highest level of intelligence. For example, he was aboard ship bound for California in April 1865 when a passing ship brought news of Lincoln’s assassination. He noted that: “The women are the ones who show the least regrets...I have for a long time suspected that woman, who weeps so easily for so many superficial griefs, possesses really less sensibility than man,” and “in the presence of a great sentiment, they are inferior.” Man’s “sensibility for small things” was “dull” under his “brutish” outward self, but in the presence of “immense grief” he takes on “supremacy” and “becomes again the master...through the greatness of his soul. Woman has more frequently the poetry of words rather than ideas.” So Gottschalk stereotyped the qualities of “Man” and “Woman” and in doing so definitely considered “Woman” second-class.

In other comments, Gottschalk blamed “Women” for prolonging the Civil War: “But for the women, our Civil War would have long ago ended. Through their imprudent zeal and the intemperance of their opinions, which in politics as in other things carry them beyond their mark, they have contributed on both sides to foment the discord and envenom the strife.” His final word on “strong-minded women” was that they were “ridiculous...they become odious as soon as their mission ceases to be that of tenderness, charity, and devotion.”

Tenderness and charity were certainly not Ada’s strong points, though she was always devoted and most generous financially to her son and close friends. Many worshipped Ada, but she was not the kind of woman Gottschalk could admire over the long term. Whatever sexual attraction there was between these two, it may have faded when there was the inevitable clash between two strong personalities. Gottschalk probably had no illusions about where their affair would lead; he may have always considered the affair with Ada a passing fancy. He certainly had the Victorian notions about a woman staying put in her “woman’s sphere,” plus the idea there were certain things “nice” women did not do, and the women who did do them were “loose,” and not deserving of respect.

The gatherings at the Maison Doree and later at Pfaff’s where Gottschalk would occasionally come in the 1860s through his friendship with Clapp did not include middle class “respectable” women. He had been raised with the model of Catholic families in France, Italy, Spain and Latin America where young women were closely chaperoned and allowed few social experiences before marriage, and young men were
free to go wherever they wanted, and learned about sex from a mistress, or a woman from the demi-monde. Marriages were often arranged by families. After marriage a man’s life with his frequently pregnant wife, children and home was separated from his leisure time at his club or the cafe where he went for male companionship and intellectual stimulation, and from his mistress where he went for sexual satisfaction, although in some cases, the mistress might be intelligent as well.

Gottschalk had a serious flirtation earlier in Cuba in 1854 when he became engaged to a beautiful sixteen year old girl from a well-to-do family, Mathilde D’Espaigne, but backed away after the family informed him that since he was courting their daughter, they expected him to marry her. Gottschalk placed some conditions on the engagement to be fulfilled by the young woman to show that she was serious about her love, but he in turn, did not have to do anything. He returned to the United States. She wrote to him every day for six months: he neglected to answer very often. She married someone else. He seemed to follow this pattern later with Ada when faced with her desire for a long-term commitment.

Ada thought her love for Gottschalk the grand passion of her life. And yet where could it have led? Even if he had wanted to marry her, where was there a place for her in his hectic life of traveling, performing, and teaching as he furthered his career? She would have turned control of her money over to him after marriage according to law – would she have wanted to share with him the lifelong responsibility for supporting his family? Most importantly, how could she have been compatible with a man who thought women were inferior to men in their mental and emotional capacities-- she, of all women, who valued her autonomy and right to control her own life.

Gottschalk’s own family history may have shaped the attitudes that doomed the Ada-Gottschalk relationship before the two of them even met. Before Gottschalk’s father Edward married Aimee Brusle in 1828, he had acquired a mulatto mistress, Judith Rubio, a free person of color with whom he established both a business relationship in 1822, and a family for whom he provided a home—a common practice of prominent men in the community. Their relationship produced five children for whom Edward took personal and financial responsibility. Both families lived very near each other at various times. S. Frederic Starr writes in Bamboula that given the proximity of their homes and the legal ties between Edward and Judith, [i]t is therefore inconceivable that Judith Rubio’s existence and that of her Gottschalk family were unknown to young Moreau…Yet he never wrote or spoke of them, nor did he in any way acknowledge them during any of his return visits.”

Gottschalk may have had complex feelings upon learning about his father’s relationship with Judith Rubio that preceded the marriage of his parents. Add that to what he observed about his parents’ marriage of convenience, typical of that time and place, and he may have gotten the impression that his father did not find his greatest joy within marriage. The effect of these feelings, conscious or unconscious, may have caused Gottschalk to find sexual relationships with women of color the only truly satisfying sexual relationships that he was able to have. During his time in the Caribbean between 1857 and 1860, he wrote in his diary:

I began to live according to the customs of those primitive countries which if they are not strictly virtuous, are, in retaliation, terribly attractive. I saw those beautiful ‘Triguenas’ with red lips and brown bosoms ignorant of evil, sinning with frankness, without fearing the bitterness of remorse. . . . All of this was frightfully immoral, I know, but life in the savannas of the tropics, in the midst of a voluptuous race, cannot be that of a London cockney, Parisian idler, or an American Presbyterian.

Certainly this is the statement of a sensual man who found sexual life most satisfying in a certain kind of setting similar to the “tropical” climate of New Orleans, with what the musician must have perceived as its own presence of a dark-skinned “voluptuous race.” This “uncivilized” place was where he could have the maximum enjoyment with the minimum of responsibility for its aftermath. A London cockney might be subject to the rigid strictures of Queen Victoria, a Parisian idler might follow revelry with a confession at church, and an American Presbyterian would have rigid ideas of sin and damnation. Perhaps the inclusion of the “American Presbyterian” too refers to Ada as someone who considered sex a sin without marriage.
Considering the intensity of Ada’s bitterness and feelings of being abandoned by Gottschalk that lasted many years and was expressed so publicly in her writing, the pair probably had a sexual relationship that was not followed by his offer of marriage. Such a sexual relationship could not have been fully realized until late summer, 1856, because they were both very busy with their careers. He was concertizing in New York City, and from December 1855 to June 1856 completed the longest cycle of concerts ever heard in America. She was rehearsing and performing her first professional theater work with Laura Keene’s company beginning in Spring, 1856. Keene ran her company with an iron hand; rules for her players included stiff fines or dismissal for lateness and absence. Even though Ada played small roles, she had little time off.

Typical of Ada’s small apprentice roles was Lady Mary in a dramatized version of *Jane Eyre*, a play that was one of the biggest successes of the season. After many such roles, on June 10, 1856, Ada took her benefit performance playing the lead in *It Takes Two to Bargain*, a fast-moving farce. She played a lovely young widow seeking a loophole in her late husband’s will in order to marry her young lover without losing a fortune. Keene herself was in the cast. *Leslie’s* reported that *It Takes Two to Bargain* was repeated every night “amid shouts of laughter and applause” and that Ada had done well.

Keene’s season ended June 21 with a play that was followed by jubilant ceremonies honoring the actress-manager. She gave a report on the very successful season, expressing appreciation to her players, the audience, and everyone else whose efforts had aided her success. Afterwards she feted her company with a late supper, and Ada joined the other ladies presenting her with a silver pitcher with drinking cups. Keene had announced that all her company had signed contracts for the coming season, so that must have given Ada the feeling she was well launched as an actress.

Ada then immediately joined the summer season of the company of playwright and actor Dion Boucicault (1820?-1890) and his wife, popular actress Agnes Robertson (1833-1916), who were at the beginning of their great fame in America. Boucicault had originally established himself as an actor and playwright in England, and he excelled at “sensation” dramas that featured scenes like a rescue from a burning building. The public loved it.

Boucicault and Robinson’s summer season at Wallack’s Summer Garden was advertised as a pleasant place to enjoy a play and escape New York’s sweltering summer nights. Ada played one of the ingénue roles in *The Phantom*, written by Boucicault who also played the title role. This blood-curdling forerunner of *Dracula* was extremely popular, as were two other plays about the perils and thrills of the lives of young actresses. These three successes helped extend the summer season well into September, and firmly established the vogue for Boucicault and Robinson that followed. But Ada’s name is not in their programs after the end of July.

In August, 1856, one of Ada’s lawyers, John Mitchell, in corresponding with Edward McCrady, Sr., Ada’s family lawyer in Charleston noted that Ada was out of town, and he would contact her later. It was usual for her at this time to go to a summer resort. At the same time Gottschalk was winding up a busy but financially unsuccessful three-month tour with Madame LaGrange, the opera star, who traveled with her very large family. By August they were in Saratoga Springs for a few days, performing and relaxing, then moving on to Newport where they met the tenor, Brignoli, and offered concerts almost every night. It is possible Ada was vacationing there, especially if she had been following news of Gottschalk’s whereabouts, and pursuing him, as Marie Howland said. It is also possible that even in the midst of busy resort life, they found a time and a place for a clandestine meeting resulting in sexual intimacy. They certainly had an intimate friendship by then, busy schedules or not.

After the summer, Ada would normally have been busy rehearsing for performances with Keene’s company again, but Keene had to delay starting her Fall season. Keene had suspected that she was going to have trouble with her five-year lease with John LaFarge who owned the Metropolitan Theater, because well-known actor-manager William Burton wanted to move his own players to that profitable uptown location. He finally bought it in June, 1856. LaFarge evicted Keene, and she was without a theater for the start of the fall season. Finally, with the help of her hackers, Keene was able to raise enough money to build a new theater, halfway between Bleecker and Houston Streets but she was not able to open it until November, 1856. In order to employ her players, she took them on tour to Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Ada did not accompany them.
Ada might not have been willing to go on tour because she wanted to stay near Gottschalk to continue their intimate relationship in New York City. In early fall, 1856, Keene's theater was still being constructed, and the opening of the season may have seemed far off. She probably counted on being able to get back in the company eventually. But now that Gottschalk was back in New York City, he was very busy. He began to give very expensive piano lessons at what he called his Conservatory (patterned after the Conservatory in Paris) to a wealthy and talented hand-picked group of pupils. Ada probably tried to cling to Gottschalk even as he lost interest in her. He began to back away, mirroring his previous behavior when facing the possibility of a long-term commitment. Gottschalk certainly was occupied with teaching, and preparing for what he hoped would be a busy winter concert season when he would have to compete for an audience with the legendary Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871) coming from Europe to concertize.

Ada, with too much time on her hands and anxious about losing her lover, seems to have put the “active, restless mind” and “fierce energies” she mentioned earlier to Julian Mitchell, into writing about her love, rather than looking for another acting job. In Ada’s 1866 novel, Only a Woman’s Heart, there are many autobiographical elements that mirror her relationship with Gottschalk in 1856 that I detail in a subsequent chapter. In her novel the character, Victor, a darkly handsome, worldly actor, seduces the heroine Laura, but once she is smitten, loses interest. After he leaves her, she flies into a rage, swears to haunt him, and seek vengeance for her heartbreak: “… you will never get rid of me as long as you live! When you are whispering your lying words of love to other fools, I shall come between you like a spectre; I shall haunt you until I die, and after.” Whether factually based or not, this gives some idea of what Ada’s perceptions of the 1856 love affair were. Ada was used to being the adored idol: if there was rejection, she was the one who did the rejecting, and she was infuriated by this turnaround.

When Ada lost her heart and her head to her passion for Gottschalk, she risked losing even more in having a sexual relationship. There was no reliable method of birth control at this time. Abortions were performed in great numbers in New York, but arrangements had to be made surreptitiously, and operations were done in unsanitary surroundings even at the swankiest abortion mill in town, Madame Restell’s establishment. Even if a woman avoided pregnancy, she might contract venereal disease from her partner. When an unmarried woman of Ada’s background had a sexual relationship with a lover, only the man’s offer of marriage could render her respectable once more. According to what Ada would write then and later, she wanted freedom of self-expression including sexuality, and respectability, though she was unmarried. That would become the central conflict in her life she would try to resolve again and again. Her wishes were in direct opposition to society’s mandate for women in her time.

Gottschalk’s public statements of why he did not marry can be found in his former pupil Octavia Hensel’s biography of him published in 1870, a year after the musician’s death in Rio de Janeiro. In it she recorded many of his comments on life and love. In one of their ongoing conversations, Hensel urged him to find and marry a sweet woman of good background (perhaps herself?) who would make a happy home for him. He confided that he never loved anyone for very long. “Music” was his only real love: he declared, “the only bride I’ll would ever claim. I shall never marry – not by my own free will, at least: nor will anything compel me to do but my own conscience.”

This is congruent with his diary entry of December 20, 1862, where he denies the statement of Richard Storrs Willis, a friend, and fellow musician and critic that Gottschalk would soon marry a wealthy New York woman. Gottschalk noted that false announcements of his impending marriage happened often, and became “more and more fabulous as I advance along the arid path of celibacy.” He consoled himself by thinking of his muse: “The eternal bride always young, always constant for all who love her.” He was constant to his muse and, “the muse’s caresses defy the outrages of time.”

Late in 1856, Ada, furious at being rejected, yet still in love with Gottschalk, began writing a series of articles that appeared on the front page of the Atlas from November 1856, into January 1857. At first she championed Gottschalk in his struggle to retain his New York audiences when Thalberg began a series of concerts in New York claiming he was unappreciated by the mobs who worshipped mediocrity in the arts. But as time passed her articles became hysterical rather than satirical, revealing details of her love for Gottschalk, and her despair at his rejection. Those articles are signed “Alastor” — a nom de plume taken from Shelley’s poem telling of the soul, typified by the poet Alastor, that searches for ideal beauty. The idealistic young poet finds tragedy rather than the fulfillment of genius in his solitary wanderings. It was
not until the final article published on January 4, 1857, “Ada Clare on Suicide,” however, that Ada attached her own name to the series. Why did the Atlas print each of these articles on Page One? At first Ada’s commentary on Gottschalk and Thalberg’s concerts was timely news of the arts, however satirical the tone. But when Ada started revealing details of her heartbreak, the Atlas may have been thinking in terms of increased circulation. 189

On the other hand, many of the Atlas staff members were loyal friends of Ada’s like Zavarr Wilmshurst who wrote poems about her plight even before her articles appeared. Wilmshurst’s poem in the November 2 Atlas described Ada as “a lone and peerless star” who had “dared her destiny,” was “lost” and had “strayed through dread infinity.”

Newspaper items in the fall commented on how fatigued Gottschalk seemed, and how few new compositions of his had recently appeared. 190 Meanwhile the coming of Thalberg was heavily publicized. Thalberg was idolized like Chopin and Lizst, and for the last twenty years, most concert musicians had played his compositions, particularly his fantasies on themes from the opera. 191 On November 16, 1856, the Atlas music reviewer noted Thalberg’s successful music debut at Niblo’s Concert Saloon with a “large, appreciative, and distinguished audience.” Many of the most prestigious critics like William Henry Fry192 of the New York Daily Tribune and Charles Seymour193 of the Times had the most superlative praise for Thalberg.194 Meanwhile on Page One of the Atlas, November 16, Ada rattled her satiric saber in support of Gottschalk in her article, “Model Concerts.” She wrote that Thalberg “out-Gottschalked Gottschalk,” but the small audience was so bored, Thalberg’s manager employed three errand boys to wake up the audience at the end of the concert. She ended by calling Gottschalk the “true genius,” and Thalberg the “spurious imitation.”

Ada might not have known that Gottschalk and Thalberg were old friends from Gottschalk’s Paris days, had renewed their acquaintance when Thalberg arrived, and Gottschalk had attended Thalberg’s first concert with enthusiasm. Perhaps she also did not know that by November, Ullman, Thalberg’s manager, had engaged Gottschalk to join Thalberg in his sixth and seventh concerts of the series. Those concerts proved so profitable that next, Thalberg was booked to appear in two important Gottschalk concerts, and Gottschalk would join Thalberg in four more of his concerts. 195 And yet the differing opinions of critics and even audiences about whether Thalberg was better than Gottschalk or vice versa, kept up some controversy, so Ada’s satirical reviews making fun of Thalberg and promoting Gottschalk did not seem out of place.

In the November 23, Atlas issue, Ada wrote “Small Beer” poking fun at certain members of the cultural establishment for being champions of mediocrity in the arts. To those “brewers of small beer,” as she called them, “there is really no difference in flavor between the ambrosial nectar of divine Olympus and the pewter-mugged haziness of their own native small beer.”196 She also made fun of fans like “Duncibella” who “frequents the concert halls getting free tickets,” boasting of “admiration piano artists have for her.”197 In her next column on this topic, December 14, 1856, she rapped audiences who clamored for Gottschalk to play The Banjo, and wondered why they ignored his “spirituelle” compositions. She compared those audiences with the group who had not liked her recent recitation of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s The Cry of the Children, a plea for social justice for children – the same audience had begged for “Mr. Wickfield’s sweet verses on ‘Lilies and Violets’.

Finally she condemned two young men “active in brewing small beer” for ridiculing her own version (also in the Atlas) of Shelley’s “Skylark” dedicated to “L.M. Gottschalk:”

Hail to thee, bright spirit!
Man thou never wert
That from heaven or near it
Pourrest thy full heart
In profuse strains of never equalled art.

That would be the last of her articles to champion Gottschalk. She must have given up hope that Gottschalk’s gratitude for her public support would bring him back into contact with her. When her former lover joined forces with Thalberg, Gottschalk received more attention from critics, mostly favorable. Ada
could no longer write of Gottschalk’s talent being unappreciated. She was out of a job as champion. She must have burned to read the *Times* report that Gottschalk could always be found in Thalberg’s audience radiating enthusiasm. The negative feelings toward her lover now took over: they may have been festering for months.

Her November 30 *Atlas* column, “Automaton Pianist,” had Gottschalk as its chief target, but it satirized the whole New York musical world, its celebrities and its critics. She wrote of presenting an “automaton pianist, Narcissus Medoro Adonis Hyperion” in his debut at the Academy of Music. Automatons were life-sized, beautifully crafted, mechanical figures who played a musical instrument, danced, or could do other tasks like writing at a desk. They were often exhibited as popular curiosities at that time in Europe and New York, and were also collected by royalty. Ada invested hers with human feelings, mixing her satire with science fiction. Her Automaton could sustain a whole concert performance, and had complex machinery. Interestingly, Gottschalk would later write in his diary that that he felt like an automaton on his extensive American tours.

Ada wrote of how she controlled The Automaton by pulling the wires that worked his inner mechanism, and how she carefully put him back in his box after each performance. She dressed The Automaton in clothes snatched from Gottschalk’s tailor at gunpoint. The mechanical figure, dressed in the musician’s clothes, physically resembled him with: “hair as black as Erebus, eyes grey as a stormy sky, and thin-lipped mouth after the manner of beautiful pianists.” Even The Automaton’s stage demeanor aped Gottschalk’s attractive dress and elegant mannerisms as observed and commented on by many music reviewers. She wrote of pulling The Automaton’s wires to make him take off his white kid gloves. His eyes “wandered over the house with melancholy tenderness” and his smile lasted for nineteen minutes. His first selection was “his great fantasia ‘In Memory of a Fool’ dedicated to Ada Clare.” She was still signing these columns “Alastor”, but by now everyone probably knew Ada was the author.

Meanwhile Gottschalk and Thalberg in the audience are not enthused over the thunderous applause and bouquets, wreaths, and other honors showered on The Automaton. Gottschalk is so jealous he faints – after he is revived, he declares The Automaton “humbug”! He complains his rival “plays just like an automaton.” He and Thalberg are furious that a mechanical man is successfully competing with them. Even “Duncibella,” the concert “groupie” has tried to steal The Automaton from Ada, but the mechanical man is faithful to her, and they live happily together in “Bleeding Heart Yard,” the name of the residence of Amy Dorritt, impoverished heroine of Dickens’ *Little Dorritt*. Surely it also refers to Ada’s broken heart.

Ada ends the article with two imaginary music reviewers raving about The Automaton’s debut. The “elegant-gossipy” reviewer from the *Daily Diluter* is meant to be Charles Seymour, noted music and drama reviewer of the *Times* who knew Ada and Gottschalk well. In real life, Seymour had described Gottschalk’s playing as characterized by “poetic languor and fitful inspiration,” but Ada has him admiring The Automaton’s playing as being superior to Thalberg’s, and comparing it to Gottschalk, saying it has “all of Gottschalk’s vigor without the least particle of his artificiality.”

In that same number of the *Atlas*, her poem called “The Everlasting No” signed “Alastor” is on Page One. The final stanza conveys the essence of Ada’s pain at the thought of separation from her lover:

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Ah! never, never more to see thee;
My eyes on thine must gaze no more;
Thy hand be linked with others only,
While I, all sad and pale, and lonely,
Yearn towards thee from a distant shore.
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The last line is: “I died when that no more was spoken,” and that foreshadows her dilemma written about in her last three columns – whether or not to take her own life now that her heart and hopes are dead.

In “Pangs of Despised Love,” *Atlas*, December 28, 1856, she describes herself as a sad, troubled child destined to lead a tragic life: “I was a serious child who often pondered why I was born. I – this mysterious me, what could it all mean? She recalls her childhood nightmares of a “Woe-stricken face…with slow, sad eyes, and a woman’s hair streaming back forlorn,” that she now recognized as an image presaging her present self.
The worst part of her sorrow is her feeling of being alone in her grief, with no one to understand. Her grief at Gottschalk's rejection in 1856 seems tied to earlier grief, when Gottschalk was the unattainable ideal of her adolescent fantasies, when her interest in him was misunderstood by other relatives, and she lacked her late mother's guidance and love during an emotionally trying time. Despite the support of friends, in 1856 she felt alone confronting a rejection, not just by a lover, but also those “brewers of small beer,” the critics who perhaps would affect the future of her literary and dramatic career.

Among Ada's last columns in this series in the *Atlas*, are “Whips and Scorns of Time”, December 7, 1856, and “Pangs of Despised Love”, December 28, 1956. Those lines are taken from Hamlet's soliloquy, “To Be Or Not to Be” in which he contemplates suicide. The last column, January 4, 1857, is “Ada Clare on Suicide”. These columns included her ruminations on what to do with the rest of her life if she would choose to live. She feels she cannot continue as a writer, and does not even mention her career as an actress. The writing in these columns is also full of images of decay and suffering like “hemorrhage of the soul.” Ada compared her agonies to those of Jesus being crucified. She writes that nails have been thrust through her heart rather than her palms, and her suffering is a cup she must drink of, however much she dreads it.

She reminisces about an oft-visited site of her childhood, the grave of Louisa Robinson who legend said died of a broken heart, having been seduced by a handsome visitor to her father's plantation. In Ada's version the visitor was one who amused himself by awakening Louisa's love, then rejecting her with no motive but “the proclivity that some men have to murder.” The end of this story seems not so much old Charleston legend as a combination of a real event of Ada’s affair mixed with fantasy. Louisa goes to her lover’s room at night. At his bedside she pleads with him not to leave. He laughs at her, flinging her love letters at her, and telling her she would do well to turn her attention to writing poetry: “Here are your letters tied in pink ribbon: next time you fall in love for variety’s sake, tie them with blue ribbons!”

In 1856, the newspapers were full of accounts of young women who took their own lives after being led astray by unloving men. Typical was the headline of one account in *Leslie's*, August, 1856: “Another suicide of a Young Girl and All for Love.” Not only the daily news and old Charleston legend offered Ada the idea of suicide as an option for women spurned by heartless men. There was the example of what happened to heroines in some of the novels she read – women whose indiscretions of the heart set them at odds with the social mores for women of that time.

Ada wrote of her own suicidal feelings:

Young as I am I feel as if my life has already closed. All that I had faith in seems to have glimmered out. Nay, the very world itself is like a dream, yet I perceive that Trigonometry, Carbonic Acid, and Gottschalk still exist.

Her allusion to Trigonometry is puzzling, but it does deal with mathematical relationships, and perhaps “relationships” is the important word here. If the relationship would change between her and Gottschalk, would Carbonic Acid, a poison she might use for suicide, even be included in this triangle?

Victorian literary theorist Lynne Schalman describes the dilemmas facing nineteenth century heroines who “try to define themselves as individuals only to discover they are breaking society’s most sacred rules.” She names the “holiest of holy laws” that “women shall have no sexual passions and desires.” The price demanded for their rebellion against this law was “ostracism, guilt, and self-loathing.” She writes that suicide was an option that offered them “the only way to exercise some power over their own destinies, and the only way to transcend the limitations and frustrations of the life left to them.”

Ada described just such power over her own life in her January 4, 1857 *Atlas* column, “Ada Clare on Suicide,” the last of the series. “If a woman gives up her own life...what follows then? Why henceforth neither man nor the world can trample on her any more.” But Ada feared what would happen after death. What if her soul might not be allowed to rest? “Are doubt, despair, and Gottschalk, things of which the soul in death takes no cognizance...or do they loom up in the untraveled country as eternal torture – engines upon which the soul may lie bound and bleeding forever?”

Yet even at this point she sees the possibility of a better way to escape mental suffering caused by a man’s rejection than suicide, for “the body sometimes assists us to work through mental diseases” given
time. By the end of the column Ada announces she will try to carry on. “I say to myself, my poor Ada, this is a short play and you may as well see the end of it. It is not courage that is demanded of you, but patience.”

Perhaps writing this series did give Ada a therapeutic catharsis for her feelings of anger and guilt. Later in the July 11, 1863, New York Leader, reviewing a work by Tennyson about another ill-fated heroine, “Mariana of the Moated Grange,” Ada would show more sophisticated notions, and be able to use her sense of humor about what might be done as self-help by “women who fall in love with some irresponsible man.” Instead of “whining about him all their mortal lives” she prescribed “journalizing,” and “frequenting the theaters” to fall in love with matinee idols like actor Edwin Booth and tenor Mazzolini “all at the same time.” If fictional heroines would get over unhappy love affairs by doing those things, Ada thought they would be “more amusing to read about.”

In 1856, however, Ada was doing plenty of “whining,” pouring out her feelings about rejected love and thoughts of suicide. Yet at the same time, a similar scenario that would end much more happily was being written about in a humorous manner on the front page of the Atlas. Ada's friend, Zavarr not only made poetic note of Ada's despair, but also chronicled events in their friend Getty Gay's romantic life, including a column on Getty in his “ Beauties of New York” series in the Atlas, December 28, 1856.

Zavarr's column on “Beauties” described Getty as resembling Ada, with blonde hair and blue eyes. However, unlike Ada’s “tense, abstracted gaze” noted by Whitman, Getty was “cherubic” and almost childlike, mixing “grave timidity” with “prattling audacity.” Playful and sassy, she never worried about going beyond the boundaries of propriety, because, as Zavarr put it she never stayed within them to begin with.

She made each of her many suitors believe he was her sole lover and confidant. However two of her lovers discovered the truth when she wrote and addressed personal love letters to each one, and mixed up the envelopes by accident. They confronted her in anger. There she was, “continually tottering like a blind child walking a precipice on the brink of perdition.”

Zavarr wrote that Getty was in now in “hot water, and confidently expected someone to save her.” He wrote of Getty standing late at night by “the dark flowing Hudson River” meditating about drowning herself in the cold water before her. Before she could take the plunge, “a strong arm suddenly encircled her slender waist.” Her hero, “a poet of acknowledged ability,” thus “saved her life and lost his heart...joining her long list of lovers.”

Getty’s reply to all this was printed directly below Zavarr’s article: she named it slander he had probably written because he had been courting her unsuccessfully for a year. However they married soon after. The fact was that as a result of a love affair with the well-known playwright Charles Gayler, Getty became pregnant, and gave birth to a daughter one night at her boardinghouse with her roommates Anna Ballard and Marie Howland anxiously assisting her. Getty, married with eight children, did not leave his family and marry Getty. However she finally gave in to Zavarr’s pleading, and they married.

Ada’s plight was different. There would be no rescuer. One suspects pregnancy when, in the last article in the series, Ada writes, “Reader, there is one thing for which no woman would forgive any man.” Ada would not forgive a man she loved who both rejected her and left her pregnant. No wonder her bitterness would go on for years ahead.

Gottschalk’s mother died suddenly on November 1 and the December 10, 1856, the Times announced his imminent departure for Paris “to take over family responsibilities for an extended length of time.” Only a few days after the Times announcement, Ada appeared at her lawyer’s offices on December 13, 1856, to draw up a will. Was this the act of a suicidal woman setting off on her dark voyage to eternity? It is more likely part of planning a voyage abroad to hide her pregnancy, restore her battered nerves, and perhaps encounter her former lover with a different outcome. Marie Howland wrote later that Ada followed Gottschalk to Paris and records show that she planned Paris as her destination. Making a will at that time was considered prudent for travelers planning an ocean voyage.

Now Ada was about to sail on the wintry, rough North Atlantic. The newspapers were full of accounts of shipping disasters especially on that ocean; yet transatlantic travel to Europe was popular during all seasons, and both Collins and Cunard lines had steam packets leaving New York every few days for wealthy tourists going abroad. Nevertheless an eyewitness described the scene at the New York docks
where “friends bid each other goodbye as if they never expected to see them again after a long ocean voyage.” In 1864, when Ada journeyed to California she would praise the comfort and safety of her ship saying: “It is no longer necessary to make one’s will before an ocean voyage.”

A December announcement of a Gottschalk concert in the Times, December 18, 1856, said that rather than going immediately to Paris, the musician would first tour Cuba, Mexico, and South America, ending in Europe. The company included thirteen year old soprano, Adelina Patti (1843-1919), already a famous prodigy, and destined to one of the most famous sopranos of her era. Also in the company, her older sister, Carlotta, soprano; and Carlotta’s husband Maurice Strakosch, opera impresario of the Academy of Music. Their successful tour would never get to Europe. The others returned home from South America in late 1858 without Gottschalk. After his restful sojourn in Martinique and the Caribbean he never returned to Europe, but eventually returned to America in 1862.

Ada had plenty of motivation to leave for Europe in addition to following Gottschalk. Whatever revenge and emotional catharsis the Atlas columns gave her, they also brought notoriety of the negative kind. Throughout her life she would write or act provocatively, and then get angry when the response was bad publicity about her. She never admitted that she was the first to put details of her private life on the front page of a New York newspaper in 1856.

On January 16, 1857, Ada stopped in at the Mitchell law office to leave a sealed package with a note asking John Mitchell to keep it safe in his “iron chest,” and to give him her power of attorney. The next day she returned and drew $310 for her first class steamer fare to Liverpool and Le Havre, some extra cash, and letters of credit. She also changed her legal name from Ada Agnes McElhenney to Ada Clare.

Her steamer’s departure was delayed by zero temperatures, ice in the rivers, and a blizzard lasting 16 hours, but on January 18, 1857, she sailed for Europe on the wintry turbulent North Atlantic. Though she travelled alone, it was already rumored that she carried more than bitterness with her as a legacy from her love affair with Gottschalk.
CHAPTER 5:
A NOT-SO-GRAND TOUR OF EUROPE
BY A FASHIONABLE LADY

As Ada’s steamer moved through icy New York harbor on the wintry January day of her departure for Europe in 1857, she was uncertain about what her future would be. Immediately she felt the “homeless, forlorn feeling of the first few hours” on board ship. She sat on deck, getting in the way of the crew and their ropes and gear, and, after trying to engage others in conversation, she felt like “an intruder.” She found her way to her “cold, stuffy” stateroom only “to come face to face with another stranger as cross as herself” with whom she would be “caged for fourteen days.” The first meal at sea had open seating and was “one huge game of grab.” Though she found the voyage “very trying” in the beginning, during the next two weeks she began to take part in the active social life on board. She considered it “generally pleasant” by the end.216

In the mid 1850s, the Collins Line’s safety record was no match for its chief competitor Cunard, but it did offer the same convenience and comfort. Steamers were becoming floating hotels, complete with luxurious carpets, plump sofas and chairs, marble-topped tables, and plenty of mirrors and chandeliers. The Collins Line advertised that “the transatlantic voyage was no longer an ordeal, but a pleasant two weeks’ excursion.” Its four new vessels, including Ada’s ship, were the most popular afloat. They were wooden ships of 3,000 tons, nearly 300 feet long with 36 feet high paddle wheels, driven by 2,000-horse-power engines.217

Passengers strolling the decks enjoyed watching the huge paddle wheels, when seas were calmer. However, Ada and her shipmates hung on for dear life when the ship battled the huge waves of the wintry, gale-lashed North Atlantic. The ship took “huge views of the horizon while standing on its head,” and every lurch “curdled” Ada’s blood.

There was even more danger of being overwhelmed by the huge flood of food and drink of every variety pressed on the voyagers. There were three elaborate meals plus frequent snacks, and one traveler remembered stewards serving at all hours “oceans of Sherry, Champagne...Port, Madeira, and Claret.” Travelers complained there was too much rich food, but hastened to over-eat. Harriet Beecher Stowe closely observed the food preparation on a voyage in 1853, and praised the “mighty rounds of beef, vast saddles of mutton, and the whole tribe of meats...served in superior style.”218

Ada arrived in Liverpool after the fifteen-day voyage, and remained a day and a night, with no difficulty getting her passport visa and money when she presented her letter of credit at Brown and Shipley. She had $1500 to draw on in the beginning – a lavish sum. But she encountered other difficulties that she described in her first letter to her lawyers John and Clarence Mitchell from Paris, February 23, 1857. She had “despaired of reaching that haven” during her journey from Liverpool to Paris which was “fearfully cold, unpleasant, and troublesome.” Traveling arrangements were so “unsystematic” they seemed made “just to tease you.” Accounts of other travelers at that time agree.

They, too, wrote of overcrowded coaches, uncomfortable, dirty, and ill-kempt hotels and inns, and maddening delays crossing national frontiers. There was endless red tape because passport and visa regulations constantly changed. Customs inspections could take hours while all baggage had to be unloaded, gone through, and then reloaded. At least Ada had no difficulty with customs: “they merely opened my trunks and shut them again.”

The only personal letters of Ada’s that survive from her two years abroad are to her lawyers, John and Clarence Mitchell. They show Ada living the fashionable life of an American woman tourist abroad. She reported to the Mitchells that the sea voyage had improved her health, but the Parisian climate “perfectly rejuvenates me” – the Parisian winter, said to be the mildest in fifty years, was “sort of soft and spring-like”, and so much better than “the rigors of a New York winter” – her health had improved so wonderfully, she hardly recognized herself, and she had gained six pounds.219
However Ada was still depressed. She confessed to being homesick, asked for news of friends in Charleston, and was impatient to receive her sister's letters that were to be forwarded to Paris by the lawyers. She wrote: “I feel like an exile, and I understand now why the ancient Romans considered it so terrible a thing to be banished. However...the climate here is inimitable and I feel grateful for its effects on me.” The words “exile” and “banished” are in accord with the shame she may have felt now that she had had time to think things over. Though she had blamed her lover for her problems, it was she who encouraged a love affair with Gottschalk and then publicized his rejection of her.

As for her first impressions of Paris, she was not “overwhelmed,” though she was “sufficiently amused.” She had not yet seen all the sights, but had “plenty of time for that.” She had gone to Greene & Co., presented her letter of credit, and “got accommodated with the needful,” noting it was also a good place “to get information about various things.” Though it was unusual for Ada to be alone in her travels, there were certainly plenty of Ada’s compatriots in Paris when she was there. There was an American chapel, an American tailor, and an English language newspaper.

During the two years Ada lived in Paris, she lived in elegant neighborhoods frequented by other wealthy Americans. In 1857, her Paris address was No. 20, Rue St. Thomas de Aquinas located on the Left Bank. This was not the Bohemian Left Bank of shabby artists laughing and drinking at the nearest cafe’, but the staid old-guard Faubourg St. Germain. She probably rented several rooms in a fashionable residential hotel, as did Harriet Beecher Stowe and other well-to-do Americans. So much for the myth that Ada lived a Bohemian life in Paris. Her first act in Paris had been to visit the nearest banking house, not the nearest Bohemian bistro. It was in New York, not Paris, that Ada would become an important part of a Bohemian community.

Depressed or not, eventually Ada got around to seeing the things travelers felt were a “must” to visit. The Gardens of the Tuileries, the Hotel des Invalides, Notre Dame, and The Louvre headed the list. She certainly got around enough to write about the Paris scene. She was a Paris correspondent for the New York Atlas and the Spirit of the Times. Typical of her Atlas writing is a "Letter from Paris," March 15, 1857, plus a Poe-like story "What Sequel?"

In this “Letter from Paris,” Ada wrote of Paris being fast-paced, colorful, and joyous. In Spring of 1857, a comet was predicted, and many believed it would destroy the world. Ada said Paris was already “mirth-inclined” and “afloat in the gayest colors,” but thanks to the expected comet, “we are to commence the last grand and jovial carnival.” Since everyone believed the comet would bring destruction, stores and restaurants might offer free merchandise and refreshment. Then “we are all to die in velvets and crinolines, feeding upon partridges and pate de foie gras, even though we have gone our former ways dressed in calico,” and feeding on “pumpkins and beans.”

She didn’t believe that “our blundering old brute of a world” would come to an end just yet. But one of the world’s blunders was in not appreciating its geniuses, and Gottschalk headed her list of unappreciated geniuses. She also listed Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Sand, Tennyson, Thackeray, Carlyle, and Matilda Heron, the American actress who popularized Camille, noting that if the world did not in the future support her “children of genius,” then the “just gods” might soon “wipe out the great blot the world is on the face of creation.”

In the March 15, 1857 “Letter” Ada reviewed several plays, concerts, and operas; relayed gossip of the musical world; and then made an oblique reference to Gottschalk. She did not name him, but described him as “one who is gifted with all fine gifts by nature, who in form and beauty is most exact and incomparable.” She used a statement of his to compare whether Americans were more materialistic than the French. Gottschalk had told Ada that “America is especially distinguished for its love of the almighty dollar,” so Americans “should inscribe an immortal dollar upon their altars.” She thought this opinion “unworthy of his admirable judgment and wit.” She observed that “the French, with five times less energy and talent for making money, love it with a ten times closer, and meaner love.”

She also wrote of a case of “musical misery and artistic starvation.” A young starving violinist stole bread from a baker who caught him, and called for the police. The baker relented and told the violinist to run for it before the police came. But the violinist, munching on the bread he had stolen, begged the baker to send him to jail where he knew he could get a good meal. Ada lapsed into a sorrowful tone, writing of “cruel mother Nature” who “givest to those of us that have hearts nothing to love, and to those that have
mortal nothing to eat!” and finished with a quote from one of her favorite Elizabeth Barrett Browning poems:

Alas, alas for thy children: we are seeking  
Death in life as best to have:  
We are binding up our hearts away from breaking  
With a cerement from the grave.”

The themes of the grave, inheritances, greed, and love betrayed dominate Ada’s short story “What Sequel?” that also appeared in the March 15, 1857 *Atlas*. There are only three characters in the story: Teresa, her uncle, and Teresa’s lover. She loves this man so obsessively; she will do anything for him. The lover is greedy for money: he wants “gold to leave this place”, and live a more exciting life. He convinces Teresa, her wealthy uncle’s only heir, to join him in a plan to murder her uncle. The plan is for Teresa to give the uncle a slow-acting poison that first puts him in a death-like coma. He will literally be buried alive, and Teresa will inherit the uncle’s money, and go off with her lover. Soon after, her lover, after taking charge of Teresa’s inheritance, convinces her that they must go to the family mausoleum to make sure the uncle has died. But when they go into the vault, they discover her uncle is alive, and trying to escape. The uncle struggles with the lover, trying to kill him, and calls out to Teresa to help him overcome the lover. However, Teresa is paralyzed with fear. The lover escapes, after locking them both in the tomb to be buried alive. It was the lover’s secret plan all along. But over the years the lover’s life is a hell on earth, haunted by Teresa, “no longer crawling appealingly at his feet, but standing over him, possessed of a legion of furies, with burning eyes, erect and terrible as an avenging angel!”

So in Ada’s article as well as letters to her lawyers and friends, the Mitchells, she writes of feeling exiled, starved for love if not for food, and of feeling isolated in the midst of the carnival of Paris. As the deprived children do in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Cry of the Children*, Ada is “weeping in playtime of others.” Her short story carries these themes even further – adding a lover’s murderous betrayal leading to Teresa’s total isolation in a tomb, “buried alive.”

However, though she may have felt emotionally deprived and isolated at that time, Ada was not a poor waif, nor someone who could long stand to be socially isolated. Ada’s concern in her letters about the amounts of money she was spending show that, despite her sorrowful mood, she was enjoying all the luxuries Paris had to offer. Indeed, spending money may have helped to assuage the emptiness she felt, and shopping and attending cultural events in the city brought her out of isolation.

One of the finest luxuries Paris offered was fashion. Catering to the needs of Empress Eugenie and Emperor Napoleon III’s pleasure-loving court, with its receptions, banquets, and balls, Paris was developing into the fashion capital of the world. The famous firm of Worth was founded the year Ada was in Paris. There were other luxuries like fine gloves, laces, perfumes, and jewelry for sale in the stores along the Rue de Rivoli, Rue St. Honoré and the Rue de la Paix near where Ada strolled in the Gardens of the Tuileries, and enjoyed famous art works in the Louvre. On the way to the Opera there were tempting boutiques along the Boulevard des Italiens displaying everything from “walking-sticks to goldfish” as another American visitor remembered. And indeed Ada must have dressed elegantly for her evenings at the Opera, and the Theater Francais. Everyone did: the sights of beautifully dressed opera and theater-goers chatting and promenading in elegant marble foyers under blazing chandeliers were often described by contemporary commentators.

However, one of the biggest single expenditures ever shown in Ada’s accounts had nothing to do with fashion or other luxuries. It was linked to someone far away from Paris – someone never mentioned before or after by Ada. But Ada mentioned her financial transaction with this person, Madame Patania, with considerable anxiety in her first letter to her lawyers, February 23, 1857:

I have sent to my friend Mrs. Patania a letter to you authorizing you to pay her on my account $300 which is the amount of a debt due to her that I have collected here. I have also enclosed a receipt for the same, dated at random, because I did not know at what precise time she would present it. It will not be necessary to take a receipt from her, that I will have myself and I suppose my own receipt is
sufficient for you. Be kind enough to give her a part of it in gold, as she does not speak any English, and she will not be able to explain herself to you.226

In the postscript Ada gave detailed instructions about a receipt she was enclosing in French, because Patania spoke and read no English. The Mitchells did not speak or write French.

However there were some mix-ups. Ada received a letter from Patania 227saying she thought that Ada’s letter authorizing payment was no good because it was not dated. Ada sent Patania a second letter, but then heard from Patania that she had already gone to Ada’s lawyers with Ada’s first letter, and collected the money.

Ada wrote her lawyers on March 31, 1857, that the woman was probably desperate for money, but warned the lawyers not to pay her twice adding, “She knows nothing of business and in fact can’t be made to understand it by any manner of explanation. I thought it best to write you explicitly about it.” Since Ada had borrowed the $300 from her lawyers to pay Patania, she next assured them that she knew she had overspent, but “henceforth, I will not spend as much – for I can live cheaper here than in America.”

What could have led Ada to making a top priority of quickly collecting the debt due to Patania, and then writing instructions to her lawyers to pay Patania? Who was Madame Patania, what possible explanation is there for Ada’s loan to her, and who owed Patania the money collected for her by Ada in Paris? Three hundred dollars was a large sum of money in those days, and asking for part of it to be paid in gold made the transaction more difficult. The lawyers did not take it out of Ada’s principal. They lent her the money, charging interest. Though Ada received that amount of money, the debt said to be due Patania, from someone in Paris, she never repaid the Mitchells. Their records show she continued paying interest on the debt. 228

The following is my reconstruction of a possible explanation. Madame Patania was an opera singer, and since Ada always had acquaintances in the musical world of the time, she may have become friends with the Patanias in late Spring of 1857 through Gottschalk’s friendship with them. A little more than a year earlier, the November 3, 1855 Dwight’s Journal of Music mentioned the arrival of Madame Eliza Deli Patania with several other singers to participate in the winter season of operas at the Academy of Music in New York. She was accompanied to America by her husband Giuseppe, a fine painter who was also talented in making caricatures and doing portraits in clay. But Madame Patania soon had financial problems when the Academy of Music couldn’t come up with the money to pay her salary. She sued for breach of contract, and the opera company let her go. 229 To raise money, she and her friends Gottschalk and Brignoli scheduled a benefit concert at Niblo’s Saloon May 29, 1856.

Gottschalk sympathized with artists like her, and wrote of “the usurious enterprise which is called the Academy of Music.” He noted that the impresarios who managed the opera season were forced to pay “exorbitant rent,” but had to charge low admission prices if they hoped to attract an audience. The honest impresarios went bankrupt, but the dishonest impresarios made money by deceiving “the artists who were not paid.”230 The Patanias managed to stay afloat in New York, and Eliza Patania later appeared in concerts with Gottschalk. When Gottschalk joined forces with Thalberg, she appeared with them and another singer at two concerts in December, 1856, that were highly successful.

So in the process of developing a musical career in America, Patania had had ongoing financial dealings as well as a personal friendship with Gottschalk. When someone who was a star performer like Gottschalk was assisted by others at an individual concert, the star got paid first and then passed on a share to assisting performers like Patania. At Patania’s benefit in May, Gottschalk and the others contributed their share to help her in her financial difficulties. It is possible that by the New Year, 1857, Gottschalk ended up owing Patania more money than he could immediately pay her. At the time, he was hurriedly preparing to go on his long tour to the West Indies. He may have wanted to settle his outstanding debts, especially to Patania, who was so in need of funds. But coping with the shock of his mother’s death in Paris in November, 1856 and taking over all the expenses for his siblings, may have exhausted his ready cash. The Patanias probably wanted to return to Europe where was a better chance for her to resume her operatic career and they did return to Paris in June, 1857.231 Three hundred dollars could have paid for their passage back to Europe.

Perhaps at the same time, Gottschalk, a man who was charitable to many people and thought of himself as a man of honor, wished to somehow make recompense to Ada for letting her down. Even
though he was ashamed of the scandal she created, it may have spurred him on to want to compensate her in some way. He would have been even more motivated to do this if her statement in the January 4, 1857 *Atlas*, “Reader, there is one thing for which no woman will ever forgive a man” meant to him that she was telling the world she was pregnant with his child. He owed money to Madame Patania, and he may have wanted to help Ada, who was bound for Paris. Somehow there must have been personal contact between Ada and Gottschalk before they both left America in early 1857, where they discussed financial concerns.

In Paris were the Escudiers, Gottschalk’s close friends, and European music publishers. They handled many financial transactions for him including giving royalties from his music to his family living in Paris. They also published Gottschalk’s articles and excerpts from his letters in their journals *La France Musical* and *L’Art Musical*. They were always good for an advance on his future earnings, and Gottschalk could have requested them to recompense Ada.

Ada may have suggested to Gottschalk that he should tell the Escudiers to give Ada money for Patania and herself after Ada arrived in Paris in February, 1857. She would then instruct her lawyers to give money directly to Patania in New York, meanwhile keeping a certain amount for herself in Paris, with no one the wiser. Thus Ada would have been able to offer Gottschalk the opportunity to give her some money discreetly, and, at the same time, she would pay off his debt to Patania with no bother to him in carrying out the transaction. She could keep her lawyers in the dark until she was actually in Paris, and make them think Patania was the only one being paid. The Mitchells would learn nothing during their meeting with Patania in New York because of the language barrier, and the extra money Ada had would never show up in the lawyer’s accounts. All these secrets may have contributed even more to Ada’s sense of isolation.

This explanation is a way of working with facts available now to produce a logical account of what might have happened. Ada was probably pregnant, and she may have miscarried or given birth in Paris to a stillborn child, or one that died soon after in late April or May, 1857, as a result of her liaison with Gottschalk the end of August, 1856 in Newport. That child was not Aubrey, who I believe was born in Summer of 1859 in New York. No wonder she wrote her lawyers, May 3, 1857, “I am not as well at present as I was when I first arrived.” Perhaps she was coping with post-partum depression, as well as grieving for her child.

There are no records that contradict my assumption that if Ada bore a child in Paris, that child did not survive. First, Ada was a very legal-minded person, who would have wanted her child to have every advantage of American citizenship. It was customary for an American giving birth in Paris to a child that survived to register the birth with the American Consul so there would be no question of citizenship. American Consular and Embassy Records of that time show no record of Ada doing that.

The *Times* regularly printed lists of ship’s passengers arriving and departing New York taken from each ship’s manifests. It listed each passenger with full description, and even included births or deaths at sea. Neither these lists nor the ship’s manifests themselves show Ada traveling with a child coming home from Europe in November, 1857, returning to Europe in January, 1858, or finally returning to New York from Paris in November, 1858. Being a conscientious person, Ada would not have boarded out a child in Europe because infant mortality rates there were notoriously high. Marie Howland, later observing Ada’s care of her son Aubrey commented that Ada was not an enthusiastic mother, but quite “scrupulous” about seeing her child had the best care possible.

After May 1857, Ada decided to move to another part of Paris because she was “fearfully bored with the small village called St. Germain though it is but a step from the large one called Paris.” But Ada’s problems with money began earlier than this. In Ada’s March 31, 1857 letter to her lawyers, she mentioned an important factor that would influence the length of her stay in Europe. She wrote that one of the banks on the list in her letter of credit, the House of Greene and Company, had failed, and she had to draw money at another bank on the list. Soon the financial panic of 1857 in America would bring Ada home until her lawyers could sell enough of her stocks to pay off her debts for that year and finance her return to Europe in 1858.

The Panic loomed larger and larger as the year progressed. By Fall, John and Clarence Mitchell were corresponding with brokerage houses in Charleston to sell Ada’s South Carolina stock, and were having difficulties. Things were bad in New York, but the Charlestonians were horrified to realize their own economy, which had been relatively stable, was being affected by what was happening in New York. One
Charleston brokerage house, Colburn and Holland, wrote the Mitchell firm on October 14, 1857, that they could not sell Ada’s stock as requested for cash either publicly or privately. They wrote that The Charleston Courier on that day told of the suspensions of several banks including the Bank of South Carolina. Mitchell was advised by the brokers to hold on to Ada’s stocks because “there never was known such times here and what will be the result no one can foretell.” Things were even worse in the rest of the country. Ada booked passage for New York in October, 1857, and was back in America by the end of November. By December 14, another Charleston brokerage house was able to get a fairly good price for her stocks, and sold them after advising the Mitchell law firm that it was as favorable a time to sell as any.

In early January, 1858, The New York Times reported that the terrible Panic was lessening. Ada lost no time boarding the steamship Arago on January 9 heading for Southampton, Le Havre, and from there to Paris. She wrote her lawyers on February 18, 1858, that she had an “uncommonly beautiful voyage,” but was now in her own style of panic about her money just melting away. She had not counted on “exorbitant prices for traveling, baggage, and the high price of my hotel bill both at Le Havre and during my first week in Paris while looking for an apartment.” She was almost out of money, and disappointed that she had not heard from them already. She urged them to send money soon, or else write her “at the debtor’s prison!” Meanwhile her apartment at No. 6 Rue Castiglione was located quite near the Tuileries in the midst of a “high-rent” district with the Rue de Rivoli and its tempting shops at one end, and plenty of other fashionable shopping nearby. It was also near swanky hotels like the Meurice. This area was a mecca for the wealthiest and most prominent of American visitors.

Ada’s March 17 letter to the Mitchells was angry and desperate. How could they leave her “destitute of money, in a strange land, and without friends!” Her health was being “injured by anxiety.” Only three weeks before, she was left “without one solitary soul, and in debt” when “by mere accident a gentlemen learned of my miserable position” and got one of the banks to lend her 500 francs. She threatened to buy a boat ticket on credit, and come home immediately to check on how they were managing her money. Ada warned them of the “delicacy of her circumstances” because: “a woman out of money in Paris is…considered a woman of evil character out of work, and as such would be turned into the street” if she could not pay her overdue rent.

Ada soon received the money that had been delayed for some minor reason, and her next letter March 25 was full of gratitude and apologies for being angry. She said the weather was wonderful; the social season was gay. Ada looked forward to seeing her lawyer Clarence Mitchell in Paris later in the year. She also tried to clear up confusion about a banker’s draft she couldn’t remember, unless it was the one “another gentleman had helped her get for $100.” Ada seemed to be careless about appearances. Borrowing money from various “gentlemen” would seem to be as bad for one’s reputation as not paying the rent on time. At any rate, though she confessed to slight homesickness, her mood had improved considerably from the year before. She seemed in high spirits and leading an active social life, though no details were given.

By July 9, 1858, Ada wrote the Mitchells from Liverpool telling them she was in search of a change of scene, “better health,” and a cheaper place to live. She would try the countryside of England for a while. Ada also mentioned having recently been in London where she had written several checks she wanted to tell them about in order to keep her accounts straight. There is no other record besides her letters to her attorneys of what her activities were, and she mentioned nothing about whether she had a traveling companion.

There were other relatives of hers in Europe at the time — notably her cousin Frances Wilkinson Pickens and his young, beautiful, third wife Lucy. He was based in St. Petersburg from 1858-1860 as U.S. Minister to Russia, and he sometimes accompanied Lucy to Paris and elsewhere on shopping sprees. They may have visited with Ada as South Carolina kinfolks in Europe often did. Lucy was as beautiful, talented, and extravagant as Ada.

Ada also may have seen friends like Charlestonian Julian Mitchell who was attending graduate school in Europe. She had asked him in her final letter to him in September, 1855, if he intended to study in Germany after graduating from Charleston College. An anecdote in scandalous book about another beauty born in South Carolina, Marie Boozer, later Countess Pourtales, alleges that Julian Mitchell saw Ada in Paris, and later told the author about that encounter. In the anecdote, the author claims Mitchell and Ada
met while Mitchell was First Secretary of the Legation in Russia, but he did not go to Russia until 1860, and she left Paris without ever returning in late 1858. According to this story Mitchell recounted Ada’s response to his telling her that everyone was gossiping about her being one of Gottschalk’s mistresses. She drew herself up proudly, and angrily declared: “I am Gottschalk’s only mistress!”

Though this story seems unreliable, the anonymous author who wrote it had other details about Ada’s life before and after leaving Charleston otherwise correct in his book. He mentioned that Ada was “to the manor born” from an aristocratic family, and had written for the *Charleston College Magazine*. He quoted from her article, “Asymptotes” in the magazine, March 15, 1855, and called it “out of the ordinary for a young lady of Charleston brought up in Miss Bates’ school.”

And so conjecture and fiction mingle with the facts concerning Ada’s life abroad, and it is often difficult to separate them. Rumors of her romantic liaisons in Paris pursued her even after she returned home. The facts are that in her years abroad Ada, once over her initial homesickness, was a pleasure-seeking, peripatetic, extravagant tourist – not a shabby Bohemian, though she did continue her writing career. Her exact dealings with Gottschalk still remain a mystery, but the Madame Patania incident, as I have imagined it, perhaps throws a little light on what might have happened. By October, 1858, Ada booked on the elegant *Vanderbilt*, the ship that was formerly Commodore Vanderbilt’s yacht, and she was back in New York November 15, 1858, just in time for the holiday season. The heyday of the first Bohemians in New York’s Greenwich Village with Ada as Queen of Bohemia was not far off.
Ada arrived back in New York on November 15, 1858. She immediately moved into a hotel on fashionable Irving Place, not far from the home of her lawyer John Mitchell. By New Year’s there was snowfall, and people with private sledges were angry that salt had been spread from the Battery to 14th Street because the omnibuses needed four lanes to get through. It was so cold that people skated on Central Park Pond in the as yet unfinished park. There was even a special house there with a warm stove where ladies could put on their ic skates.

New York was partly recovered from the Panic of 1857, and offered plenty of amusements and luxury items for those like Ada who were able to afford them. She joined the crowds on Broadway braving the cold to browse in bookstores and art galleries, shop at the stores displaying their finest wares for the holidays, and attend crowded theaters and concert halls. Ada’s former employer, popular actress-manager Laura Keene, had the season’s longest running hit, Our American Cousin, Ada, who loved Shakespeare, saw Hamlet and the Merchant of Venice and lined up with the New Year’s crowds to see Fanny Kemble of the noted English acting family present readings from Shakespeare. Uncle Tom’s Cabin, the play adapted from Stowe’s best-selling novel, was a consistent crowd pleaser and Cordelia Howard, though getting old for the part, still played her famous role as “Little Eva.”

Lighter offerings included Cupid and his Frolics at Barnum’s Museum, Campbell’s Minstrels, and even Professor Bartolio’s flea circus. While Gottschalk relaxed in the Caribbean and took time out from his career, two other pianists made their debut in New York. One was Robert Goldbeck from Germany who would soon marry Ada’s friend, the painter Anna Mary Freeman. The other was Gottschalk’s friend Arthur Napoleo, a young Portuguese pianist who championed Gottschalk’s works.

Everyone was talking about the highlights of the Great Fair—a fundraiser for the Ladies Mount Vernon association to raise money for the final payments on George Washington’s home and tomb. Keene and her company, Cordelia Howard, opera singers, minstrels, Napoleo and Goldbeck, plus many others from the entertainment world joined in a series of benefit performances crowned by a Grand Ball at the Academy of Music. The great hall’s tiers and boxes were draped with the Stars and Stripes. Above the orchestra hung a huge banner declaring “WOMEN RESCUE HIS HOUSE AND TOMB.” The festive group enjoyed a promenade and concert. Then those gathered danced to the newest waltzes, polkas, and galops by Johann Strauss before and during the midnight supper.

This was the exciting New York Ada loved that made her declare: “New York is a darling old town to my taste!” Balls, theater, opera, shopping, and gallery-going: most of the activity took place on Broadway or nearby. There was a great promenade, especially in late afternoon from Broadway and Spring Street where the elegant white marble St. Nicholas hotel stood, up Broadway past the busiest shops, restaurants, galleries, and theaters to Broadway and Bleecker Street. A few doors up, at 647 Broadway, was Pfaff’s Restaurant and Beer Cellar—an address that would become an important center of Ada’s life.

While Ada was in Europe, her friends Henry Clapp, Jr., editor and Fourierist, and Fitz-James O’Brien, journalist and author, in searching for good beer had also found a home at Pfaff’s for the avant-garde group that Clapp had long hoped to form. On a typical day, Herr Pfaff himself stood near the door to give a genial welcome to his patrons and direct them to the bar and tables nearby or downstairs. There the specialties of the house were served by buxom girls threading their way among tables in the smoky air. Patrons enjoyed German pancakes with sweetbreads, specially brewed coffee, fine cheeses, excellent wine and lager beer. After dinner Pfaff would offer fine Havana cigars, though some men brought their own pipes. Men enjoyed smoking, conversation, and looking through the many American and European newspapers Pfaff had on hand.

Herr Pfaff gave a hearty welcome to the group that would be known as Pfaff’s Circle, and he made a special place for them downstairs—a long table with room for 30 in an alcove away from other tables. It was directly underneath bustling Broadway, and the group often heard footsteps from above when they
weren’t making so much noise themselves that they drowned out other noises. They talked about their work, read verse and articles aloud, noisily critiqued each other, disputed each other’s opinions on the newest play or novel, drank, smoked, flirted, and had fun.

They had impromptu poetry writing contests, gave surprise parties for each other, and pooled their money for suppers on special occasions. They had come to New York to become writers, artists, actors, or musicians. Living in boardinghouses, they looked for a place to congregate with kindred spirits. Some of them had originally met with Clapp and other Fourierists at The Club, and had followed Clapp from there. At Pfaff’s they found friends, stimulating conversation, and good food – they could get a fine cup of coffee for 3 cents, and the finest meal in the house for 50 cents.253

Henry Clapp, Jr., was the lodestone of the group and actively organized them into an ongoing forum on the newest writing. He hoped to found a new publication and eventually realized his dream by founding the *Saturday Press* in October of 1858 to feature new writing and straight-shooting criticism of the current literary, artistic, and theater scene in New York. Clapp had been a rebel since his youth in New England. After battling for the abolitionist cause and for temperance, he was now ready to rebel against the stagnant status quo of the Boston and New York literary establishments. His instrument would be this avant-garde weekly whose rather shabby offices were located at 109 Spruce Street at the back of Horace Greeley’s *Tribune* building. In the brief life of the first run of the *Saturday Press* from October 1858–December 1860,254 the Press had tremendous influence, but stepped on many toes.

In the third issue of the paper, November 16, 1858, Clapp didn’t mince words about his purpose: “once and for all, we shall never adopt the policy of indiscriminate praise.” He gave examples of publishers, writers, musicians, and artist who sometimes produced good work, sometimes “trash.” If and when they did badly, the *Press* would tell the truth in its reviews. Clapp thought the “low state of literature and art” in this country was due to writers and artists being “thin-skinned about accepting constructive criticism.” He was out to get publishers who threatened newspapers with lawsuits for unfavorable publicity. His paper would also expose their tricks to “defraud authors, enrich themselves, and swindle the public!” These are bold statements by an editor who very much depended on publishers advertising in his paper to keep his paper in business.

Albert Parry, the first to chronicle this Bohemia in his *Garrets and Pretenders*, summed up the importance of the *Press*:

Everybody worthwhile in contemporary letters seemed to be among its contributors, even though the pay was irregular, small, and at times practically nil. The public gasped at the editorial paragraphs of Henry Clapp…on the whole the *Press* did valuable spading of American life and spanking of the native arts. 255

The first issue of this “house organ of Bohemia” was published October 28, 1858, and featured original fiction, satire, poetry, and criticism. Almost immediately the New York press was writing about Bohemia and tying the lifestyles of its colorful inhabitants to the journalism it was producing. In a January 1858 editorial the *New York Times* took notice of the Bohemians’ emerging talents, but warned they were not “productive members of society,” were becoming an uncomfortably large group, and that not one of them really liked to work, or had made a success.

But as literary historian Christine Stansell wrote of them, “Far from a pack of free-and-easy artistic vagabonds, the Pfaff’s crowd consisted primarily of hard-working writers who made penurious livings from the penny press and magazines.”256 They had to work hard as journalists to earn any money, even though they might be careless with what little money they had. 257

In his mid-forties, Clapp was the group’s leader and mentor-- most of the others were in their twenties and only O’Brien was over thirty. When Clapp proclaimed he would also found a New York version of Paris’s Bohemia in Greenwich Village, the New York press quickly took note of what was going on, and dubbed Clapp and his followers, “Bohemians.” Presiding at the head of the round table at Pfaff’s, Clapp used his wit to spark everyone’s conversation, and like his pseudonym “Figaro,” Clapp liked to stir everyone up. He said of Horace Greeley, editor of the *Tribune*: “He’s a self-made man who worships his creator” and of a well-known minister looking for a new position: “He’s waiting for a vacancy in the
Trinity.” Clapp, still the abolitionist, described Cuba as the “land of the flea and home of the slave.” A staunch feminist, he scolded the new publication, *The Nation*, for discouraging women contributors: “They’ll have to call themselves the ‘Stag-Nation’.”

It is not surprising that Ada would find her way to Pfaff’s to join old and new friends drinking beer, smoking cigarettes, gossiping, and exchanging witticisms. What is unusual is that Clapp would share the head of the table with Ada, or with anyone. His usual treatment of a newcomer was to give him or her a hard time. Contemporaries noted that “if a new face appeared... he (or she) was treated with scant courtesy until he had won a position at the table by an intellectual tilt.”

Did Ada earn her position as “Queen of Bohemia,” sharing Clapp’s sovereignty (though never his bed) by displaying her wit? Perhaps it was that, and Ada’s habit of being in charge that impressed Clapp. Certainly their years in Paris gave them much to discuss. His later comments about Ada showed that despite his sarcastic manner to many, he had a soft spot for her. He appreciated Ada’s beauty and gracious manner to everyone even as he supported her as a woman free in her ideas and behavior. Others in Pfaff’s Circle noted that Ada could temper his abrasiveness with her own conversation, “brilliant, witty... and always kindly.”

Clapp always enjoyed developing new writers, and was pleased when Ada accepted him as a mentor. Ada in turn recognized his abilities as an editor, and was happy to learn from him. Later he would support her personally and professionally in his own writing, and would publish her weekly column “Thoughts and Things” in the *Press* from October, 1859 until the paper’s first demise in 1860.

As Ada looked around the table at her fellow Bohemians she saw some of the most interesting, up-and-coming, talented people in New York. Fitz-James O’Brien was becoming more and more successful, and the birth of both the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *Press* in 1858 would give his writing, and especially his Poe-like short stories, even more exposure. It was O’Brien who helped Clapp formulate final plans for the *Press*, and he worked as a skilled drama critic helping to establish the weekly paper’s good image in the literary and journalistic world in its earliest months. Sadly he had to leave the *Press* to give more time to other work that paid better; the *Press* was always shaky financially. O’Brien’s personal life was still chaotic – he could be charming in high society, but was still “Fists-Gammon-O’Bouncer” when it came to dealing with any of his colleagues who crossed him.

Then there was tall, fair-haired, dapper Edwin “Ned” Wilkins, five years older than Ada, and a talented playwright and drama critic with a wide knowledge of literature and drama who also spoke fluent French. He had a neatly trimmed mustache, a merry twinkle in his blue eyes, and had a charming way of tilting his head attentively in personal conversation that concealed his deafness in one ear. Though his personal manner was shy and kindly, his writing was sharply satirical and his conversation sparkled with outrageous humor. He and Ada shared many jokes — both loved to ridicule high society. Though Ada had abandoned it, Ned aspired to it.

Wilkins’ plays *My Wife’s Mirror* and *Young New York* were smash hits poking fun at the *nouveau riche* social climbers of the 1850s. Yet he adopted the smart clothes and fancy manners of those he ridiculed. From a modest background in Boston and largely self-educated, Ned had his manners, wardrobe, and image improved by Cora de Wilhorst, daughter of a wealthy businessman. She then turned Bohemian when she eloped with her penniless music teacher, and attempted an operatic career without her father’s money to support her. Indeed *Young New York* probably owed its popularity to being a spoof of Cora’s flight from the better classes to Bohemia, and her family’s shocked reaction. Wilkins cashed in on being an emissary of Bohemia with his popular column “Bohemian Walks and Talks” for *Harper’s* in 1857. He was the *New York Herald*’s drama critic and took over from O’Brien as theater critic for the *Press*, making his pseudonym “Personne” famous. Wilkins, Clapp, and Ada often swapped opinions on plays and players between their columns in the *Press*.

Another of Clapp’s important assistants in launching the *Press* was Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Born in in New England in 1836, he left his wealthy uncle’s New York business firm at the age of 19 when his first book of poetry, *The Bells*, sold very well. He and Ada had been friends when they both wrote for the *Atlas*, but it was O’Brien who was Aldrich’s boon companion. They might carouse all night, and sleep all day, yet they managed to do their prolific writing and some editing in between. Despite his merry youth and bright sense of humor, Aldrich defected from Bohemia early on and subsequently bad-mouthed it; he eventually
felt more at home back in the Boston literary establishment editing the *Atlantic Monthly*. Even his poem that seemed to be the voice of Bohemia in its heyday and began “We were all very merry at Pfaff’s” contained the undertones of Aldrich’s disaffection.

Walt Whitman was the one genius of the group. He might sit with a few friends at a table apart from the main table at Pfaff’s, but he considered himself a member of the group, and knew he was among friends. He would come over late in the day from Brooklyn by ferry, and take the Broadway stage line to Pfaff’s. By the time the Pfaff’s circle was forming, his 1856 second edition of *Leaves of Grass* had still not sold any better than the first. Only Emerson and a few others had thought well of the first edition and this one, too, was not well received. Whitman was rather at loose ends, and often spent time riding up and down the Broadway stage line enjoying the companionship of the drivers. With his ruddy face, sharp blue eyes, long beard, rough flannel coat and baggy trousers, Walt Whitman seemed a quiet onlooker at Pfaff’s, but the group treated him with deference, and Clapp drew him into their discussions. Whitman enjoyed himself, and later reminisced: “There was as good talk ‘round that table as took place anywhere in the world.”

In 1855 Thomas Bailey Aldrich had received great acclaim as well as brisk sales when he published *The Bells*. When Aldrich asked Whitman if he liked the book, Whitman replied: “Yes, Tom, I like your ‘tinkles’: I like them very well.” Whitman probably realized that few appreciated *Leaves of Grass* because he was far ahead of his time both in the form of his poetry and the ideas he expressed, especially those regarding sexuality. Perhaps he didn’t begrudge Aldrich his success with a work that might soon be forgotten.

When a third edition of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* was published by Thayer and Eldridge in 1860, Henry Clapp and the *Press* rallied to the poet’s support. Whitman remembered Clapp later as “my friend and a much needed ally.” Even before its publication, Clapp wrote to Whitman promising to do everything possible to promote this 1860 edition. And he kept his word. Justin Kaplan noted in his biography of Whitman: “Apart from paid advertisements, between December, 1859, and December 1860, Clapp published twenty-five items by or about Whitman in the *Saturday Press*. The items included reviews, commentary, controversy, imitations, and even parodies.” Whitman later wrote that his “own history would not be written,” if there had been no Henry Clapp, Jr.

Ada was always an outspoken supporter of Whitman, commenting favorably in her column in the *Press* on his free verse style, “Walt Whitman’s ‘Child’s Reminiscence’ could only have been written by a poet, and versifying would not help it. I love the poem.” They probably became friends around the time Whitman singled out her beauty and intelligence in his column, “Street Yarn,” in 1856. Later when Ada rented a brownstone house, and had Sunday evening receptions (1859-1862), Whitman was often in attendance. She was one of the women he claimed as his “sturdiest defenders,” and declared: “Some would say they are girls little to my credit, but I disagree with them.” Ada certainly had the characteristics of the kind of woman Whitman described in his poem “A Woman Waits for Me.” These women were “not one jot less than I am”— Whitman thought them any man’s equal. Like the women he described in the poem, Ada had “divine suppleness and strength.” She knew how “to swim, row, ride... retreat, advance, resist” and “defend” herself. She too was one of those “ultimate in their own right...calm, clear, well-possessed of themselves.”

Another woman who championed Whitman, and became Ada’s close friend was Adah Isaacs Menken. The two women probably met making the rounds of acting auditions in early 1859. They had in common their southern background, and interests in acting and writing but they differed completely in physical appearance. Menken was a voluptuous brunette, with brooding dark eyes and an intense low voice. Menken was then all alone, and struggling with personal problems; Ada brought her into Pfaff’s Circle where she found like-minded, supportive friends. Menken made up grandiose stories of both Spanish and English noble birth to conceal whatever were her true New Orleans origins. She may have been the daughter of a white mother and a father who was a free person of color. When she married Alexander Menken, a musician she met touring in a theater company, she converted to Judaism. Though never faithful to any man for long, she was faithful to her adopted religion for the rest of her life.

Mr. Menken took her home to Cincinnati and his close family ties, and she tried on the role of devoted Jewish wife, and had her first poems published in *The Israelite*. But the excitement of New York beckoned, and Menken dumped her marriage for a theatrical career in New York. There Menken started a relationship
with famous boxer John Heenan, “The Benicia Boy.” She insisted they had been legally married: he denied this. He left her alone and friendless to bear their son, who only lived a few days.

Meeting Ada and the Pfaffians bettered her emotional life as well as her literary and dramatic career. Whitman influenced the poetry she successfully published, and she wrote articles explaining and praising his poetry. Her big acting success came in 1861 playing the title role of the play’s hero, Mazeppa, making it forever after associated with her name. She would make more money touring as the Tartar prince in America and Europe than any other performer in her day. In the climax of the play, Mazeppa is tied naked to a horse, and sent on a wild ride in the hills, in this case up a ramp built onto hilly stage scenery. Menken had gorgeous legs and was also a skilled rider. Dressed in a body stocking with only a wisp of chiffon for a loincloth she electrified the male audiences.

There were many liberated ladies who came to Pfaff’s not as girlfriends of the men, but as individuals with their own talents. Some left only a fleeting memory. There was an actress named Annie Deland who briefly gained fame in supporting roles in Laura Keene’s company in 1859-1860. There was Dora Shaw, a poet and actress, who left a wealthy home for Bohemian life. Shaw’s motivation was a scandalous divorce. She and Marie Howland tried hasheesh together, but only once because it resulted in their hallucinating themselves back to Ancient Egypt, and scared them out of their wits.

Then there was much-married, spiteful Mary Hewins Burnham. She was well-known for writing “dog dramas”: plays where trained dogs took an important part of the action. Her second husband and third husband-to-be fought for her love with pistols blazing at Pfaff’s. No one was killed and the lady survived to marry Stephen Fiske, the noted drama critic. She became a gossip columnist later known as “Giddy Gusher,” and would become Ada’s nemesis toward the end of Ada’s life.

Meanwhile Ada often visited the Unitary Home on Stuyvesant Street to see her old friends Marie Howland and Anna Ballard. The Unitary Home was the brainchild of Edward Underhill, and some other Fourierist survivors of The Club; it was a “brownstone utopia” where twenty boarders lived, sharing all expenses for room, board, and a housekeeper to supervise cleaning. There was even enough money for their recreational activities; on the weekend they hired a three piece orchestra, danced, and played musical chairs.

It was there that Marie had married Lyman Case, the lawyer who admired her for bettering herself to become a teacher and school principal, but who then decided she needed still more improvement in diction and etiquette. This “Pygmalion” situation strained the marriage--there were other disagreements, and later they would divorce amicably.

Anna Ballard was still studying voice and trying to break into opera, but it looked more and more like she might end up pursuing a missionary career in the Far East. To prepare for that, she studied Eastern religions, and often shared information with Ada, whose lively mind had many interests. Ada and Menken also now attended spiritualistic séances together as did many other well-educated and prominent New Yorkers.

But Ada’s main attention was on the earthly world, and she started auditioning for acting roles in early 1859. Finally she was cast to appear as Cleopatra’s handmaiden Iris in a revival of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra. This spectacular production rehearsed the whole month of February and opened March 7, 1859, for a three week run at the Metropolitan Theater. This was the last performance in the well-known theater, ensuring it would go out in “a blaze of glory.” The lavish costumes and scenery were touted as being historically accurate in every detail. The succession of scenes included a Bacchanalian Feast, a Grand Naval Battle, and as backdrop for Act II, a painted Panorama unrolling views of the Sphinx, Pyramids, and other wonders. There were rave reviews all around, but Ada’s small part was not reviewed – she was decorative frosting on the exotic cake.

Playing Antony, and managing the production was Edward Eddy, a veteran actor-manager who gained experience at the Bowery Theatre where he developed an emotive, scenery-chewing acting style. At the Bowery, where Ada later played roles in the 1860s, the actors either pleased the neighborhood’s working-class audience, or hooligans in the balcony would pelt the players with fruit pits and rinds from high.

Unlike those of the Bowery, audiences at the Metropolitan were wealthy and sophisticated, yet they too relished broad acting and demanded “exciting spectacle with beautiful costumes.” They loved plump and famous actress Elizabeth Ponisi’s portrayal of Cleopatra, though photographs of Ponisi as “serpent of
the Nile” show her as too solid to slither. Ned Wilkins described her in a *Saturday Press* review, March, 1859: “Cleopatra was a very large person in crimson velvet, bad for Egypt’s hot weather, but especially bad for large women anywhere … crimson velvet making her as large as the Pyramids!” No wonder Ada was needed for a touch of female glamour.

But instead of following up this appearance with more auditions, Ada turned from role hunting to house hunting. For the first time since leaving South Carolina, Ada made plans to establish a permanent home. She signed a lease with landlord Peter Asten to rent a new three story brownstone at 86 W. 42nd Street for one year at $500 a year, payable quarterly with options to renew for several years. Ada’s neighborhood was a new one, at the limits of fashionable city living in 1859. It was not far from the massive Croton Reservoir with its fancy architectural facade occupying the west side of 5th Avenue between 40th and 42nd streets. This marked the end of “a line of brownstone houses that stretched all the way from Washington Square.” As for Manhattan north of 42nd Street: “it was garbage dumps, shantytowns, and decrepit taverns. Brand new Central Park, “was some of the ugliest land on Manhattan, and only with thousands of men and millions of dollars did Frederick Law Olmsted… make it a thing of beauty.”

Though Ada’s new location was at the outer limits of settled brownstone neighborhoods, new horsecar and stage lines made it possible for her to easily go downtown to shop and attend the theater and opera. The location had been the site of the 1853 Crystal Palace Exhibition inspired by the world famous London prototype. An airy dome of glass supported by iron had covered 5 acres and housed World’s Fair Exhibits. Even though the Crystal Palace burned in 1858, the area was still a mecca for sightseers who came to see Croton Reservoir. New Yorkers flocked there to take buggy rides, stroll, and climb to the top of the high walls to see a panoramic view of Manhattan.

Ada had much to do before moving in on May 31, 1859. She bought furniture, arranged for service with the gas and water company, had the house cleaned and painted, and even planted a garden in the backyard with her landlord’s permission. Why the effort to establish a permanent home at this time, when she always had a transient lifestyle? I believe that she was readying a place to bring up her son Aubrey. As stated before, there are few facts and much mystery concerning Aubrey’s birth and who his father was. The consistency of Aubrey’s age and birthplace recorded in census records of 1860 and 1870, make it highly probable that Aubrey was born in New York City shortly after Ada moved into her new home. The June, 1860 New York City Census shows Mrs. Ada Clare living at 86 West 42nd Street with Aubrey Clare, aged one year, birthplace New York City. The Hammon ton, New Jersey Census of August, 1870, shows Aubrey Clare, 11, boarding with Edward and Marie Howland. His birthplace is given as New York City, and it is noted that both of his parents were born in the United States.

One of the few times Ada ever mentioned Aubrey directly in her writing was in Spring of 1864, when she wrote that he was 4. The first person to write about Aubrey was Getty (Gay) Wilmshurst who wrote in the *Press* about his appearance at the “Royal Bohemian Supper” on Christmas Night, 1859, at Ada’s home on 42nd Street. Aubrey was probably then about six months old. Getty described a toast to Ada, “The Queen of Bohemia,” followed by a toast to “the first of Her Majesty’s Subjects, the Infant Prince of Bohemia.”

When did Ada become pregnant? My timetable shows it is possible that she became pregnant either in Europe before she left November 3, 1858, or during the holiday season after her return to America. Since “journeys end in lover’s meetings” and vice versa, Ada’s liaison may have occurred during an impassioned farewell in Europe, or during an enthusiastic welcome to New York by a lover she had not seen for a while.

Why did Ada not marry the man who was Aubrey’s father? Her beauty, education, background, and wealth made her a desirable wife. Perhaps Aubrey’s father used Ada for sexual fulfillment, but was too proper to marry a woman “of easy virtue.” Perhaps her lover would have wanted to marry her, but was forced to be away from her in order to pursue his career. Perhaps her lover was poor, and too proud to live on Ada’s money, necessary because she would not give up a comfortable life. There were rumors of a secret marriage that later could not or would not be acknowledged by either party. Ultimately it was probably Ada’s own choice not to marry because she did not want to give up control of her own money, and therefore control over her life.
childbearing inevitable. She had already run away from becoming a planter’s wife in South Carolina. She had other plans for her life.

When Ada discovered she was pregnant she had few options. She did not choose abortion, dangerous under any circumstances. She did not board Aubrey out, and then discreetly arrange an adoption. Nor did she ever pretend to be a widow with a child of a dead father. She did not pretend that Aubrey was a poor orphan adopted out of charity. She decided to assume complete responsibility for her child with no lies about his origins, even though lies would have released Aubrey from the stigma of illegitimacy, a terrible burden at that time. She gave Aubrey the last name “Clare” – the same as her pen name, which had become her legal surname.

At that time pregnant women usually did not appear in public. However, many actresses in the theater did not worry about this—the well-known actress Agnes Robertson appeared onstage the day before delivering a full-term baby. When Ada appeared on stage as Iris in Antony and Cleopatra in March of 1859, perhaps an elaborate cloak over her costume allowed her emerging pregnancy to go unnoticed during this brief appearance.

The women’s fashions of the day favored concealment – hoops were so wide, women could scarcely go through the door. Broad hoopskirts and the popular fashions for mantles, cloaks, and large shawls would have enabled Ada to dress in such a way that she could have gone out to house hunt and order furniture without revealing her pregnancy. Lawyers and friends could have handled other details for her to make her move possible by the end of May.

The summer of 1859 was the only summer Ada did not go away to a resort or vacation cottage during all the years she lived in New York. Perhaps only close friends and her lawyers knew why. In July she sent a note to Clarence Mitchell asked him to bring her allowance to the house and pay some bills for her because she still could not go out. He visited her several times. By mid-August she left the house to attend a performance of Matilda Heron in Geraldine, and her review was her first published piece for the Saturday Press.

By October of 1859 Ada had her own weekly column “Thoughts and Things” with her byline in very large print. Her writing in the Press would include book reviews, reviews of important literary magazines like Harper’s, some drama reviews, comments on women’s issues, humor, and parody. Personal comments, confessional in tone, about her own feelings appeared occasionally. By early 1860, she had provoked many attacks in print by trumpeting her views on the benefits of the Bohemian lifestyle, and her opinions on sexuality. Many objected to her caustic and provocative literary reviews, but they fit well in the Press, echoing the sarcastic tone Clapp’s own writing took when showing up hypocrisy and deflating pomposity, two of his aims in founding the Press.

When others attacked Ada, Clapp was always quick to defend her in his columns, but Ada did well defending herself. In her column, March 17, 1860 she wrote that she had been attacked by those who did not think or feel deeply and “thought any variation from an inflexible routine of life was a sure symptom of an invalid moral system.” Ada satirized their criticisms of her personal qualities:

an acquaintance with general literature, a frankness of speech and manner with men, a disposition to dress becomingly... a good appetite, a cheerful expression of countenance, a love for piano music, an occasional acquaintance with rouge, an aversion to lying, and an ability to think for oneself.

As far as whether a woman could be virtuous when, like Ada, she had had a sexual experience outside marriage, Ada considered a woman still “virtuous” because she had “loved fully.” Just as a man could not be described as brave until “that quality has been displayed when he faced danger,” a woman “can hardly said to be virtuous until she has loved fully.” “Virtue is that quality that keeps a woman pure and incorrupt... whatever she may do.” In claiming her own instincts came “directly from nature and from God” there was no temptation for Ada to tell “social lies” to make her conduct acceptable to polite society. These strong statements reveal that Ada had come a long way from the guilt, rage, and feelings of helplessness she expressed in her Atlas columns in late 1856 after Gottschalk’s rejection.
Now Ada would use her financial independence to make a life for herself and Aubrey in comfortable surroundings. She would integrate her work, social life, and home life through the friendships that touched all these areas. She and Aubrey would receive emotional support from these friends who became like family, and who would not shun Ada and Aubrey because of narrow-minded ideas of respectability. Ada soon turned her household into a miniature “brownstone utopia,” offering some of her closest friends room and board for little or even no rent if they were low on cash.

Zavarr and his wife Getty Gay were among the first to move in. They were kindred spirits who were in complete sympathy with her situation with Aubrey. Getty too had faced the problems of being an unmarried mother until Zavarr intervened to give Getty’s daughter a father for the child’s short life. Zavarr, though trained to be a clergyman, had early been exposed to freedom in self-expression and sexuality by his mentor the Countess of Blessington, who was often the honored guest of her friend Lord Byron at his household in Italy. Ada’s household also followed that pattern of free-spirited, artistic individuals with their assorted children living together as a family not necessarily related by blood or bound by the laws of matrimony.

Ada, Aubrey, and the Wilmshursts were soon joined by Elizabeth “Lizzie” Campbell, a beautiful, redhead writer befriended by Ada. She was born in Scotland in 1836, emigrated to Nova Scotia with her parents, and then attended a teacher’s college in Toronto. Lizzie wanted to be an actress and writer so left her parents to come to New York on her own.

One day Ada encouraged Lizzie to bring her stories along to the Press offices to be read by the newest assistant editor, William Winter from Boston. He was the same age as Lizzie, and had come to New York after his friend Thomas Bailey Aldrich read his poetry and encouraged him to try for a literary career in New York. At that time both Aldrich and O’Brien were leaving the Press because they made more money writing for other publications. Clapp was happy to hire Winter to be his assistant.

Winter also met the group at Pfaff’s, and fell head over heels in love with Ada, despite conflicted feelings about her notoriety resulting from his proper Boston prudishness. Somehow Ada kept his friendship, and then played matchmaker for him and Lizzie. They fell in love though they, too, were very different. Lizzie learned to ignore “Willy’s” prudishness; he learned to tolerate her militant feminism. They married in December, 1860, and he joined Lizzie at Ada’s.

The Wilmshursts and the Winters acted as surrogate parents for Aubrey, so he spent his earliest years not having to face a lack of family connection or the social stigma of having no legal father. He did not leave this sheltered situation until later. When Aubrey was still very young, and they were in New York, Ada had a great deal of control over the world that surrounded them. She was especially supported by her loyal Bohemian friends. Her own connection to Bohemia was through these friends and her position as contributing editor to the Press with her weekly column.

When the new directions in the work of Bohemians like Clapp, O’Brien, and Wilkins was admired, and the Saturday Press was successfully posing a threat to what was stale in the literary establishment, the establishment fought back by ridiculing the Bohemian way of life. Ada, the Queen of Bohemia, defended her subjects, and as she did so, she defined her own role in all this. What was she, a “virtuous woman,” doing with friends who were considered anything but virtuous? How could she reconcile being “virtuous” with being Queen of Bohemia? She wrote in the Press on February 11, 1860: “I cannot appreciate this definition of the Bohemian... he must take pleasure in keeping his boots and his cheese in the same drawer...in cooking upon his shovel and tongs (over his fireplace)...and eating out of the coal scuttle.” Her opinion was that Bohemians did not delight in ridiculing the public’s social and religious sentiments; they did pay their debts; they were respectful to women, and did not “wallow in a slough of carnalism.” All in all, the Bohemian was a cosmopolite, and never narrow-minded, one with a sympathy for the arts who was above and beyond convention. Not a “victim of rules and customs,” the Bohemian would “gracefully” step over these, and be guided by “principles of good taste and feeling.”

And how should a Queen of Bohemia behave? The model could scarcely be found in Godey’s Lady’s Book. Ada wrote in the same article of meeting the model for her own lifestyle and household in Paris, though she never mentioned this wealthy woman’s name. She was no Musetta flirting and carousing at a Left Bank bistro, nor one who “chained herself to the wheels of Society.” Not for her a “large and gloomy house”: instead, a “smaller and much gayer one.” She sold her “immense accumulation of uncouth family
“silver,” and had instead, “beautiful and dainty china and glass.” The furniture was “natural” and comfortable, unlike the massively overstuffed furniture of the Victorian era. Her friends were selected not according to “the mandates of society,” but were entertaining people “capable of giving and receiving pleasure,” and “[w]hoever tried to stand upon his bank account found himself tacitly dismissed.”

Ada considered this woman who brought out the best in everyone the most noble of women. She was Ada’s model to soar beyond “narrow thought, unvirtuous morality, and uncharitable harshness of code.” Like her, Ada would spread “the white wings of an angel,” and inspire all who assembled around her to high standards. In other words she would not exclude anyone for being “bad,” but hoped they would learn to be “good,” by following her own example. So even though Ada could not be the “angel in the house” as wife and mother in a conventional family, she saw herself as playing that role of guardian and example of her own version of good moral and spiritual values for her new family, the Bohemians.

“The Royal Bohemian Supper” at Ada’s house on Christmas Night, 1859 that introduced baby Aubrey to her circle was like a family holiday party. Everyone gathered to celebrate the success of the Press, and enjoy the new baby. Getty’s write-up named Ada “The Queen of Bohemia” for the first time here and bestowed titles on the other guests as well. Among them were “Baron Clapper,” or Henry Clapp, Jr., editor of the Press, “Count Wilkinski,” a.k.a. Ned Wilkins, drama critic of the Press and New York Herald; and “The Grand Potentate of Turkey,” Oscanyan Bey, ex-Turkish consul general; and even “Sir Archibald Hooper,” one who “really knew how to get around the ladies!” This was probably Stephen Massett, an Englishman with a great shock of red hair, who was a writer, singer, and comedian known for giving his own “one-man show” as he traveled the world.

This jolly, motley bunch made many toasts to each other and the Press, now in its heyday and as solvent as it would ever be. Ada was first with a toast to the long life and prosperity of their “house-organ of Bohemia.” Then everyone else toasted her as “The Queen of Bohemia,” and Aubrey as “her first subject, the infant ‘Prince of Bohemia.’” Next “Baron Clapper” sprang to his feet and burst into “a torrent of eloquence” thanking the Queen and other contributors to the Press for its success due to their writing. “Count Wilkinski” answered that the “Baron” was not only a “brick” but a “tower of strength” because no other living man could have “carried the Press through a week under banks of jokes more ponderous than gold bullion.”

After this, they seated themselves at the round table in Ada’s comfortable dining room, and two maidservants served the turkey and the rest of the huge meal. After dinner they made more champagne toasts, and held a singing contest won by Ada, even though she was hoarse from a cold. She sang a song composed by Stephen Massett: he had set one of her poems to music. By then there were a few quarrels among the heavier drinkers, but there were many more jokes, one at the expense of “Lady Gay,” Getty herself. They all admired her scarlet dress, but her husband, Zavarr Wilmshurst teased her for being so thin she was leaner than the turkey after it was boned. She may have already been suffering from the illness that took her life; she would scarcely live out the year ahead.

There was more to running Ada’s communal household than playing hostess. Without two maidservants, she would have never had time to turn out her weekly for the Press. First she had to take time to supervise her servants properly. There was daily shopping for food and meal preparation in the days of large meals, no supermarkets, and little refrigeration. Baking was separately done, and sometimes took at least two days a week. Washing and drying clothes for even a small family took at least one day. Ironing would occupy the day after doing the laundry. Having an infant in the house meant even more work, and one of the maids was chiefly occupied with Aubrey’s care. The rituals of daily, weekly, and seasonal housecleaning went on constantly. Also many clothes were made at home. Ada was handy with her needle, but called in a dressmaker for most of their clothing, after shopping for fabric, thread, and trimming, and deciding on the patterns that were just beginning to be manufactured. She had exquisite taste, and always designed original variations on whatever was fashionable. She varied from fashion only in having her hair cut very short, even though she went to the hairdresser to have it curled for special occasions.

Ada had her household managed well enough to turn out her weekly column from October, 1859 until the paper ceased in December, 1860. She was well-suited to join the ranks of its contributors. First of all, she was not afraid to criticize the establishment when it was hostile to good new talent. Even as she
bemoaned her troubles with Gottschalk in the *Atlas* in 1856, she had also bad-mouthed certain members of that establishment as being “small beer” who would never recognize excellence. However, being contentious alone would not have qualified her for the *Press*.

Her most important qualifications were that she was well-educated, read avidly, attended theater, opera, and art galleries and museums, and was in touch with what was current in the cultural life of New York. She was able to write intelligent literary and drama criticism. She also had a delightful sense of humor and did well with satire and parody – the forte of all the Bohemian writers. She wrote candidly about women’s issues, and her comments on women writers, on stereotypes of women in the books and plays of that era, and how women fared as intellectuals are of interest today.

If Ada also sometimes used her column to air personal problems and grievances, Clapp did not mind, and supported her openly in the paper. Her enemies became his enemies too. As a mentor he tried to help her do her best writing. Later her mean-spirited Pfaffian acquaintance Mary Hewins Burnham would claim that Clapp often did Ada’s writing for her when he stayed at her house. Proof of that statement’s falsehood is that Ada never rid herself of her elaborate writing style with long sentences. Her words and ideas were witty, but her style was verbose while Clapp had “caught the trick of French terseness and sharpness” displayed in a style of essay invented by French journalists called the “feuilleton.”

This style was especially associated with the writing of the French journalist Jules Janin, drama critic for the *Journal des Debats* in the 1840s and 1850s whose writing Clapp had encountered during his years in Paris. Characterized by “wit, liveliness, and lightness of touch,” this style was lauded by noted American author William Dean Howells, “if you were in the habit of rendering yourself in prose, then you necessarily shredded your prose into very fine paragraphs of one sentence each, or of a very few words, or even of one word.” Howells thought Henry Clapp had brought this style back from Paris and confessed, “I long desired to write in that fashion myself, but I had not the courage.”

Though Ada did not write in this terse French style, she expressed ideas more continental than conventional in her writing about prudery and sexuality in the *Press*. On October 29, 1859, she reviewed the current exhibit of work by the noted American painter William Page at the popular Düsseldorf Gallery on Broadway, an important center for painting and statuary. Ada had previously written that the gallery was also the only place in town where “a lady, in the toils of shopping, can at the same time rest from her labors, and improve her mind.” However, when Page’s nude painting *Venus* was displayed at the gallery, there was public furor about whether respectable women should visit the gallery to see it.

Ada did not think the *Venus* immodest, though noted that others thought it “immoral for the human eye to gaze on without colored spectacles” and that they “think the human form a crime … if they once fully realized that under their own clothes they themselves are naked, they would at once become hopeless residents of Bedlam.” Ada was amused by the women who furtively peeked at the *Venus* even as they pretended to be looking at the clothed *Diana* directly opposite. Those who openly looked at the nude goddess, “glared at *Venus* with slaughtering looks.” Ada thought they would have gladly stoned Page for the “sin” of suggesting that a woman may be “young, handsome, and seductive.” Ada’s comments caused the gallery to cancel their advertising in the *Press*, and then such mobs crowded into the gallery that the painting was moved to a larger exhibition hall.

Ada’s columns brought attention to her outside of New York as the *Press* circulated to many cities. Eventually her family heard about her new career in journalism. Richard Henry Stoddard sent some of her columns to her cousin Paul Hayne. Hayne always asked for more news of Ada, though this time he began his letter with: “Pardon my alluding again to so delicate and disagreeable a topic.” In Victorian parlance, a “delicate topic” could refer to a range of sins including lewd conduct. Obviously the family had heard about Aubrey’s birth, making Ada’s conduct a more “delicate topic” than ever. However Hayne, a writer and editor himself, was interested in and perhaps envious of her position as a columnist for the *Press*. He wrote Stoddard that he considered the *Press* a “spirited journal,” but wondered about the status of its “literary position.” He was impressed that Ada was a “regular correspondent, and asked: “does she rank at all in the ‘Literary’ world of New York?”

Soon after, Ada reviewed her cousin Paul’s latest book of poetry *Alholia* in the *Press*, December 3, 1859. She said it would be “indelicate” for her to sing his praises because they came from the same city, and were “early acquaintances.” Tactfully, she did not mention their family relationship, but did recount that even as
a child, she thought Hayne “a greater poet than Tennyson.” She demonstrated what she thought was the high quality of his poetry by reprinting a sonnet called “Life” from the book. It had lines like: “The spirit Heaven! What is it but a Life, Lifting its soul beyond our mortal years, That oft begin and ever end in strife — .”

Hayne had subsidized Alvolio’s printing, hoping its publication would maintain the high opinion Northern critics had of his work when his first book of poems was successful in 1855. Meanwhile he was also the editor of Russell’s, a Southern magazine out of Charleston that published the finest Southern writing of its day, and he was discouraged to see his publication forced into bankruptcy. The Civil War that would see Southern writers cut off from Northern editors and publishers was looming. Hayne was fiercely loyal to the South and an outspoken supporter of its causes. He would soon cut his own ties with the Northern literary establishment.309

Ada’s last legal ties to her family, and in particular to her Grandfather Wilson, were cut by a release she signed September 12, 1859—a quitclaim deed stating she would make no more claims on Wilson, her guardian under her parent’s will. This was part of the process of the final settlement of the McElhenney estate following Ada’s sister Susan’s twenty-first birthday in January, 1859. In a quitclaim deed, in return for a person signing a release giving up future claims on an estate, the person was usually given money or property. Sometimes it was just a token; other times something much more substantial. Earlier Susan had returned to Ada the $500 Ada had given Susan to help support her until she inherited her share of the McElhenney estate. Now after Ada signed the release, Wilson gave her $2,000 in cash. There is no evidence that Ada and her Grandfather Wilson ever communicated directly again before he died in 1864. In 1855, she had changed her name because her proposed stage career under her real name would have shamed her family in Charleston. How much more shameful for them for Ada to become an unmarried mother.310

So Ada left Charleston behind for good for a new life in New York. As far as her writing career, she was now a columnist for a literary paper that ”really embodied the new literary life of the city” and in which “young writers throughout the country were ambitious to be seen”311 as William Dean Howells would later write.

After the Press published some of his work in 1860, Howells left Ohio. After visiting Boston, he stopped in New York in August to visit the offices of the Press and observe the scene at Pfaff’s. Howells was fascinated with Ada, and had hoped to see her there because it was known that the “queen of Bohemia sometimes came to Pfaff’s.” By now “her name or pseudonym” was known as far west as Ohio. Though her smoking shocked him, he admired her “sprightly gift in letters.” He also admired the writing of many of the Pfaffians, but after meeting a few of them in person, he was aghast that they lurched around the room, since they were getting over “a fearful debauch.” He was very impressed by Walt Whitman, feeling a “spiritual dignity” in him when they met.312

At that time Howells considered Boston much the superior literary center, and Clapp’s “bitterness against Boston” along with his bitterness “against respectability” rubbed Howells the wrong way. He prophesied that Bohemia was “a sickly colony transplanted from the mother asphalt of Paris” that would never last in New York.313 Though his words were prophetic, the downfall of Bohemia did not happen for the reasons he described. Bad times were ahead for Bohemia, Pfaff’s Circle, and the Press. As clouds of the impending Civil War and adverse changes it would bring to Bohemia gathered on the horizon, Ada would find that the world she made for herself and Aubrey would begin to fall apart as well.
CHAPTER 7:
BOHEMIA AT WAR

The year of 1860 found Ada and her Pffafian friends at the height of their influence. Andrew Wheeler, a writer and sometime member of Pfaff’s Circle, described them watching a performance at the Winter Garden Theater in Fall, 1860. Sitting in their private box, they drew even more attention than Frezzolini, the haughty diva seated in the opposite box. Ada was wearing a white, full, flounced dress with a white lace mantle, without any bonnet to confine the “masses of blonde hair thrown back from her forehead.” Getty and Zavarr Wilmshurst sat on one side of her, and on the other sat Ned Wilkins, the Press and Tribune drama critic, often whispering comments in her ear that made her laugh. Next to Wilkins sat Henry Clapp, Jr., editor of the Press. Wheeler’s article, reprinted in the Press in November, 1860, called Bohemia a “mythic empire, a la Paris” and noted that Ada was Queen, and her companions in the theater box were the “Court Circle.” Wheeler’s characterization of Ada and her closest friends showed that even some of the members of Bohemia had mixed feelings about their group. And as usual, Ada seemed to be the lightning rod that drew the strongest negative charges. He wrote that all the writers and artists of New York’s “Kingdom of Bohemia” had talent, ingenuity, vivacity, and cultivated intellects. However those assets were mixed with dissipation, immorality, cool effrontery, and gay nonchalance toward traditional values. He compared Ada’s “bewitchingly audacious, sparkling, wicked” newspaper columns with the writing of George Sand. In mid-nineteenth century America, American critics admired the distinguished French novelist and essayist’s work, but they deplored her lifestyle. As Frank Luther Mott wrote, “This preoccupation with morals was characteristic of American comment on French literature.” For example, Julia Ward Howe commented on Sand and her work: “The hands might be sinful...but the box they broke contained an exceeding precious ointment.” Otherwise, the Courant gave expression to “the general idea” Americans have: “French literature is immoral; literature is an ‘expression of society,’ hence French society is immoral.” So of course Sand’s work was suspect.

Many contemporaries called Ada the “American George Sand,” so it is worth discussing their similarities and differences. Certainly they were both fascinating personalities, gifted, intelligent, and were in the vanguard of those women whose sexual equality with men was far ahead of their time. Sand and Clare were both writers who gained equality with male colleagues who, for the most part, took their writing seriously. They both knew the important writers, composers, social reformers, and politicians of their day. Perhaps there is no way to compare Sand’s Paris to Ada’s New York; and Alfred de Musset, Chopin, and Mazzini with Whitman, Gottschalk, and Ada’s Fourieristic friends like the Howlands as well as her other acquaintances at Tammany Hall. Rather Ada, the Bohemian group and her other friends were cultural heirs to these new ideas from Paris especially regarding journalism, drama, and social reform.

Ada never turned out the huge body of work that Sand did, nor had her great influence. During her long lifetime Sand’s writing challenged her society’s views on a grand scale about many important social issues including the treatment of women. Ada, who had read Sand’s work, worked on a smaller scale during a much shorter time period writing about the position of women in her newspaper columns in the Atlas, Press, Leader, and Golden Era.

Ada is most like Sand in her writing on the position of women, her own open sexuality, and in how this openness was regarded by her contemporaries. Like Sand, Ada, too, had a professional career and a sexual life outside the traditional family role of woman as wife and mother. At that time George Sand’s France was more sophisticated about sexual freedom than America: at least in France a well-to-do married woman, if discreet, could take a lover while maintaining her marriage. Sand first broke with that tradition when she left her marriage, embarked on a career, and openly lived with a series of lovers. Ada broke with accepted tradition in prudish Victorian America not only by openly raising her child born out of wedlock, but also by
using her newspaper column to trumpet her views about sexuality. Respectable women were not supposed
to have sexual desires much less express them in having sex outside of marriage.

In the America of 1860, the Bohemians that had been influenced by their Parisian counterparts were
considered suspect too. Wheeler ambivalently assessed Ada and her group as “amiable people … aside
from a certain alleged moral relachement and as worthy of a good opinion as most folks can afford to be in
degenerate times.”323 His opinion was representative of those who admired their fellow Bohemians’ talents,
but deplored their morals, and were a little uneasy about being tarred by the same brush. Some, like
Thomas Bailey Aldrich, would soon become ultra-respectable and distance themselves from Bohemia by
bad-mouthing it.

But it was not social disapproval that made the fortunes of the Bohemians falter in the next few years.
There were larger forces already building that would cause their downward slide. The Saturday Press,
even at the peak of its critical fame, was never self-supporting, and income from advertising dropped when money
tightened up as war approached. The crisis between the North and the South affected businesses like that
of Boston publishers Thayer and Eldridge who were considering becoming financial backers of the Press.
Edward Howland, its original backer, had spent his savings and sold his library of rare books trying to keep
the Press afloat, but it finally ran out of money. With Walt Whitman acting as his intermediary, Clapp had
tried to persuade Thayer and Eldridge to back the paper, but finally they declined.324 Then with war
between the states imminent in late 1860, Thayer and Eldridge lost so much of their Southern revenue, they
themselves went bankrupt.325 By December, 1860, the Press was out of business as well.

Thayer and Eldridge’s bankruptcy and the death of the Press was a double misfortune for Ada. She
would never again have the literate, appreciative audience she had with the Press, and Thayer and Eldridge
had been on the brink of publishing her first novel Asphodel. She had been working on it for about a year,
and made a hurried trip to Boston in September, 1860, to make final arrangements. They had set it up in
type, and were about to print it. Thayer and Eldridge’s October 6, 1860 ad in the Press claimed that Asphodel
would be out November 1, and that its author Ada Clare was “one of the most brilliant writers in
America.” Sadly, the manuscript has not survived, but Ada may have used some of the material in her later
novel Only A Woman’s Heart that was published in 1866.

Ada had also been writing for some of the earliest issues of another publication, Vanity Fair, (1859-
1863) a comic illustrated newspaper originated by some of the Bohemians.326 Vanity Fair had more solid
backing financially than the Press ever had, plus input from the best wits at Pfaff’s, where it was supposedly
born. A wealthy Baltimore merchant, Frank Thompson, bankrolled it for his friends the Stephens brothers:
Henry, the cartoonist who was art editor, William, who was general editor, and Louis, the publisher. Frank
Wood, only 19 years old, was the editor. The comic weekly, probably one of the best of its time for
humorous writing and excellent satirical illustration, lampooned many aspects of New York life. It ridiculed
well-known personalities like powerful editors James Gordon Bennett and Horace Greeley, and popular
minister Henry Ward Beecher. The paper made good use of the forte of Bohemian writers – witty light
verse, and parodies. It depicted events of the day that fascinated New Yorkers like the visit of the Prince of
Wales in October, 1860. Edmund C. Stedman’s poem “The Prince’s Ball” with marvelous illustrations,
made a terrific hit, and was his first literary success.

It was also strong in its political satire of the national and international scene. From the beginning the
paper was against Lincoln’s presidency and the abolition of slavery. The Stephens were never wild about
Lincoln and were strongly anti-abolitionist, as were a few in Pfaff’s Circle. However after the Civil War
began in April, 1861, most of them became War Democrats. So Vanity Fair made fun of Lincoln and was
against banning slavery, but was not disloyal to the Union cause.

Ada contributed “A Home-Made Shirt,” to Vanity Fair’s first issue, December 1859. She came out
squarely in favor of manufactured shirts. She recounted what happened in one household when the father,
worried that continued talk of women’s rights would make his wife and daughters “strongminded,” told
them “he would wear no more shirts not made by them.” He was sure making shirts by hand would
enhance their true womanhood. Morning and evening, the women toiled over the shirts, so occupied they
began to neglect meal planning, and towards the end of the week, “the most malignant of all symptoms of
domestic disease broke out – need I say cold cuts for dinner?”
The women of the family worked long and hard to produce six shirts, and not one fit correctly. The man looked deformed in those shirts, but had to wear them because his wife gave his ready-made shirts to the poor. Forced to alter the shirts, the wife and daughters became hysterical; the domestic help left because of the atmosphere, and the wife and husband visited their lawyer separately to discuss divorce. But after surveying the domestic damage, the man finally allowed ready-made shirts to be purchased, and peace was restored. Ada ended her article with an itemized list – the cost of the homemade shirts was $369 including the lawyer’s fee for divorce consultation, plus gifts from the man to his wife, daughters, the housemaids, and the cook to soothe hurt feelings.

Meanwhile in Ada’s personal life, her “Sunday Evenings” in her handsome brownstone townhouse on 42nd Street continued with all sorts of interesting people gathered at the round table in the dining room. Her “easy style of talk and charming manners” made everyone feel at home. She was as much the hospitable gracious hostess as if she had stayed in Charleston, and was entertaining the planter aristocracy. She welcomed others besides those well-known in the arts, journalism, and politics. You could never tell who would turn up, or what would happen next. One evening, as Walt Whitman was on his way up to Ada’s, he met a shabby woman begging for help. He took the woman to Ada, knowing Ada would take care of her, and this happened more than once. Another frequent guest was McWatters, a kind-hearted policeman who loved children. He was the first to nickname Aubrey “The Prince of Bohemia,” and gave him a big, brown mug with a frog painted on the bottom to encourage the “Prince” to drink all his milk.

Ada’s friends Getty and Zavarr Wilmhurst had been an integral part of her household, but in 1860, Getty’s health got steadily worse, and in September she died of a wasting disease. Ada, Marie, and Zavarr sat up with Getty during those last long nights before she died. Charles Gaylor, the well-known dramatist who was the true father of Getty’s child, came just before the end to say goodbye. After Getty’s death, Zavarr continued to live at Ada’s home. He acted more and more as the man of the family, taking over tasks like going down to the Mitchells’ law office to collect Ada’s allowance.

In May of 1860, the landlord Asten had insisted he would only renew Ada’s lease with a huge increase in rent but the Mitchells helped Ada negotiate her lease for another year with a more reasonable increase. Could Asten have wanted to get rid of Ada as a tenant because he had doubts about the respectability of Ada’s household? Perhaps, but it is more likely that he simply followed the lead of other landlords in the area who doubled the rents on fashionable brownstones because approaching war made for unstable financial conditions.

Ada would have new boarders by the end of the year. She had been encouraging the growing romance between shy, prudish William Winter, the poet and drama critic, and beautiful, red-haired avant-garde, actress and writer, Lizzie Campbell. Ada was thrilled when they married in December, 1860, and became a part of the 42nd Street household. Having Zavarr, “Willie” (Ada’s nickname for Winter), and Lizzie in her home in addition to the presence of her two Irish household helpers may have reassured her that Aubrey could be safely left at home while she traveled. She planned her first long trip since she had returned from Europe in 1858.

A Cuban Interlude

Ada purchased two tickets for Havana, Cuba in January, 1861, arranged with her lawyers for enough money to pay all expenses, and immediately left with her good friend Anna Ballard as her traveling companion. It was fashionable for wealthy American tourists to visit Cuba in winter months to get away from cold weather. Cuba’s tropical delights – hot weather, blue skies, lush flowers, and palms – were often compared to the Garden of Eden. Havana, though a colonial outpost of Spain in the Caribbean, was a large, internationally known city, filled with imposing architecture as well as “blue and white and yellow houses with roofs of dull red tiles” built right up to the edge of very narrow streets.

Ada’s vacation trip may have had the added purpose of seeing Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Marie Howland remembered, “Hearing of Gottschalk in the West Indies she took steamer for Havana, dragging with her faithful Anna Ballard.” The musician had first gone to Cuba to concertize in the last part of 1859, after two years composing and relaxing in the West Indies. He had been so successful that the
management of the Tacon Theater had signed a contract with him to conduct an Italian opera company in Havana for the 1860-1861 seasons. Anna Ballard, Ada’s friend and traveling companion, may have wanted to audition for a future opera role in Cuba. She had long been studying to be an opera singer while supporting herself as a teacher in the Five Points mission school in a rough neighborhood. Ballard was a fine musician who would later teach singing at Vassar from 1869-1872, and publish a book of vocal exercises.

If Ada’s hidden agenda for the trip was to see Gottschalk, why hadn’t she gone earlier? He had been there for a year – and Cuba would be the first place he had been during his five years in the Caribbean where he was most accessible to Ada. However, this was the first time it was easy for Ada to leave Aubrey in good hands, and perhaps the imminence of war with its potential for disrupting travel spurred her on. In December, 1860, South Carolina had seceded from the Union, and other Southern states were doing the same. These events following Lincoln’s victory in the national election were giant steps on the path to war. If war came, the Northern navy would have its warships out along the Atlantic coast to blockade Southern ports. So if Ada ever wanted to visit Gottschalk in Cuba, January, 1861, might be the last time possible for a safe sea voyage.

She may have been concerned for Gottschalk’s health after reports of his severe illness in Fall, 1860. The newspapers even published a false report of his death. It is not clear whether Ada heard “of him” or “from him.” It would have been easy for her to get news of the opera season and other musical activities in Havana. Every newspaper or magazine with news of the performing arts had correspondents abroad, and there were American actors, musicians and even circuses performing in Havana.

Ada wrote nothing about her trip to Havana until 1865 in the Leader, where she mentioned little beyond her comment on the fragrant gardens of Havana “seen under the soft beauty of the tropical moon,” contrasted with the shabbier side of the city. And she fondly recalled her huge laundress who smoked a cigar.

Julia Ward Howe was known as a supporter of women’s independence, but writing in her travel book about visiting Cuba at that time thought it best for American women to have a masculine escort, unless they could afford to hire a volante, a two-wheeled carriage with a driver, two horses, and another man on a horse going ahead to guide them. They could go about the city respectfully and safely in this fashion. A typical tourist day for Ada and Anna might be as described by Howe: to hire a volante and “dress in their best clothes three times a day…drive before breakfast, and shop before dinner, and after dinner go to flirt their fans and refresh their robes on the Paseo.” The busy schedule was only interrupted by the usual siesta taken during the unbearably hot afternoons.

The Paseo, where so much activity took place, was the grand avenue lined with palms and flowering trees running across the city from sea to bay, with two carriage drives abreast and two malls for foot passengers. From the Paseo there were good views of the Morro fortress that dominated the harbor, the Presidio, and the Cathedral towers.

The Paseo was where the fashionable shopped. Women shopped from their carriages at the shop’s door where salespeople brought their wares out to them. Howe reported that the most popular items for women to buy were dress fabrics like figured linen cambric, transparent white muslin, and also Catalan lace to trim curtains, sheets, and pillow cases. Also popular were exquisite Spanish fans, and tablecloths with matching napkins trimmed with red or blue edges, and showing scenes of bullfights, balloon ascensions, and platoons of soldiers. American families never left for home without barrels of oranges, boxes of sweetmeats, and boxes of cigars they had delivered to their ship just before departure.

On those tourists’ typical days, twilight was the time for paying calls: few Americans came to Havana without letters of introduction to an American in residence. Then there might be a stop “at the entrance of the café, where ices are brought out to ladies in carriages.” Pleasure driving began about five, culminating at eight, when tourists joined the Havana upper classes seated in their carriages or fashionably promenading at the band concert in the Plaza de Armas, across from the governor’s palace with its fragrant gardens. The military band played for an hour under palm trees and mangoes. Then it was time to return to the hotel for the usual late supper.

Nightly pastimes became even livelier during Carnival Week. Windows along the streets of the city were filled with “faces and figures in full dress,” and parties of maskers went down the narrow, cobble-
stoned streets “screaming at the public with high, shrill voices.” The Plaza was full of frenzied activity in the balmy air under the tropical stars; rich and poor alike, all masked, eating, drinking, and carousing. Food vendors served fried cakes, fish, meat, fruit, and wine and coffee. Many couples performed Cuban folk dances to the informal accompaniment of guitar music, and the rattling of castanets. Other groups of maskers ran about, dressed outlandishly. White men dressed as blacks and vice versa, men dressed as women, and even poor people put on at least a false nose or false beard. It was one of the few times the aristocrats mingled with the crowds: the wealthy notable for their full dress, the women crowned with flowers and jewels. The wealthy revelers went on to *masquerade*, masked balls that lasted until the five a.m. church bells marking *matins.*

Even without the excitement of Carnival Week, the Tacon opera theater provided lively social activity and plenty of excitement besides music. Gottschalk wrote about his opera and concert audiences: “The Havanese public is essentially Hispano-American, that is to say *ardent et primitif.*” They made a big to-do over their favorites, and Gottschalk had been idolized from the first, even outside of Havana. In Puerto-Principe after he left the concert hall he was honored by the local dignitaries and a group of “distinguished ladies” marching with a battalion of soldiers carrying torches “while the townspeople sang ‘Glory to Moreau!’”

The Havana opera audiences had their favorite singers too, and thought nothing of making noisy demonstrations pro or con – and one man’s favorite singer might be another’s occasion for booing and hissing. Even mistakes in performance created havoc. Max Maretzek, an opera impresario in both New York and Cuba (and friend of both Gottschalk and Ada) remembered a luckless tenor who missed a high note in his aria because he was distracted by the tickling of a feather in his hat. When he sang his next solo, the audience shouted each time the tenor reached for a high note. There was enough audience turmoil that the Spanish government had an official attend every performance to keep the peace, and, such was the Havanese love of opera, to make sure that the full program was given. No last minute cast changes or shortening of the program was permitted. Maretzek thought Havana a manager’s delight because the government authorized him to send a doctor to examine any performer trying to miss a performance because of illness. The government forced the performer to go on if the doctor found the performer was faking it.

Opera was the prime social event where people went to see others and be seen. The women in particular dressed lavishly in very décolleté ball gowns. Even among this elegant crowd, Ada made quite an impression. The February 10, 1861 edition of the newspaper *Gaceta de Habana* described Ada thus: “Celebrity. We would not be fair if we do not call by this word those who can be noticed for their gifts and talents.” The writer acknowledged that there were many celebrities in Havana, but singled out Ada Clare, “the well-known British-American writer…who has become a great poet and outstanding novelist. During our last nights at the opera we have had the pleasure to see her in the balcony.” Despite some misinformation in this notice, one thing was true. Ada was a celebrity. She and Anna attended the opera, conducted by Gottschalk, the whole month of February. It was the last and most brilliant month of the whole season, when the most famous performers had their benefit performances. Gottschalk’s own very important benefit concert took place February 23. Though the audience loved him, they were rather bored with his program, and, as had happened before, a reviewer complained about lack of rehearsals.

Did Gottschalk neglect his work to spend time alone with Ada? Perhaps not, but a public meeting was inevitable. They certainly traveled in the same artistic circles, and even if she had not seen him anywhere else, she could easily encounter him at LeGrand’s, the most popular restaurant in town for American tourists and the opera company. The proprietor was a Frenchman who ran a large, “handsome and airy” restaurant famous for good food, and also rented out a few rooms where many of the opera singers stayed. Dana also stayed there, and remembered hearing rehearsals “at nearly all hours of the day of operas the Habaneros are to rave over at night.” The opera company also availed themselves of billiard rooms and gambling on the premises, plus the convivial Cafe Escavoizza next door.

After the opera season ended Gottschalk immediately began to rehearse for the second of his “monster concerts” scheduled for April. The mammoth concert production would feature thirty-nine pianos and a chorus of five hundred besides a huge orchestra, and individual soloists. The late Jeanne Behrend, editor of the modern edition of Gottschalk’s *Notes of a Pianist*, suggested that Ada’s visit distracted Gottschalk, and
thus caused his poor showing in his April concert. But Ada was on her way home by March 1, 1861 so she alone cannot be blamed for his poor showing. Libby Rubin suggests that during Gottschalks' whole time in Cuba: “he was not able to overcome the difficulties of working with non-unionized Cuban musicians whose independence and wretched discipline were the trial of many a guest conductor. Gottschalk was able as a conductor, but not enough of a taskmaster to insure more uniform success.” Rubin noted that he never again pursued “the profession of conductor as an end in itself.”

**War At Home**

In April, when Gottschalk was conducting his “Military Fantasy,” the thunder and noise of the grand finale of his “monster concert” featuring almost a thousand performers was indeed military make-believe compared to the war beginning that very moment in his native land: the Civil War that would bring bloody combat with hundreds of thousands killed and maimed, and many more civilians uprooted. On April 13, 1861, headlines blared the news that Southern forces had opened fire on Union men trying to resupply the federal garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The war that had been threatened for so many months was declared at last. Just after the first shots were fired, New York City was draped with flags, and 250,000 people crowded into Union Square to pledge loyalty to the Union. The Times called this “the greatest popular demonstration ever held in America.”

The majority of New Yorkers supported the fight to preserve the Union, but some felt no obligation to go to war with the South. Many businessmen had strong economic ties with the South, handling the cotton crop, investing in Southern mines and railroads, and a few owned plantations worked by slaves. But almost all of the businessmen eventually began to help raise money to finance the war.

Soon enthusiastic crowds were cheering on Broadway as men paraded by in regiments hurriedly raised to help defend Washington, D.C. The nation’s capitol was perilously close to Virginia’s Confederate regiments. In April the first units of New York volunteers had been organized, and by the end of 1861, there would be sixty-six New York regiments in the Union army. Many parks and squares would be filled with barracks as recruitment was stepped up. Soon New York women would make efforts that led to the founding of the United States Sanitary Commission to see that care would be given sick and wounded soldiers.

Ada was one woman who was not interested in helping with the war effort. And what was Ada's position now as a Southerner living in the North at war with the South? Ada would have had to take a loyalty oath to the Union, however grudgingly. She had never demonstrated the kind of loyalty to the South or her family that would have made her return to Charleston. According to Marie Howland, Ada had always felt that her family had treated her badly. And yet surely she was worried about her family’s welfare since there was active warfare around Charleston and the Lowcountry from the beginning of the war.

Nevertheless almost no evidence survives of communication with her family at this time. There is only the draft of a note in May 1861, on the back of a receipt for a bill, in which she promises to send $12 to a cousin in the South, perhaps to help with financial troubles. It is not known how much family news she still received (most likely coming from her sister), but news of warfare in Charleston and its surrounding area was reported in the newspapers. In book reviews in her Leader columns in 1862-63, and columns for the Era in San Francisco in 1864, Ada wrote carefully disguised comments that show she was basically in sympathy with the South.

As the war progressed, Ada would later feel the pinch in her pocketbook, as income from her Southern investments diminished, and the cost of living rose. She had already borrowed from her lawyers to cover money spent in Europe, and to set up her household on 42nd Street. The Mitchells acted like bankers for her, and charged interest on what she borrowed. Little by little she paid back her loans by drawing from her principal. The full impact of her diminishing income did not come until 1862.

Ada’s friends felt the effects of war more immediately. Even Gottschalk, by now broke and unemployed in Cuba, began to think about returning home but was not financially able to return until Maurice Strakosch, musical impresario, offered him a contract. In New York many of the Bohemian
journalists found immediate work as war correspondents. Covering the first important battle at Bull Run on July 17, 1861, were Pfaffians like poet Edmund C. Stedman, Edward H. House, drama critic of the Tribune, and Charles Henry Webb, formerly of Vanity Fair. 355 Some, like Fitz-James O’Brien, left to join the army. However there would be one empty place at Pfaff’s never to be filled again, but not because of the war.

By 1861, Ned Wilkins was writing drama criticism signed “Personne” for the Leader, and he had written for the Herald, Press, and Harper’s Weekly. He was at the top of his profession. But early in May he caught a bad cold that rapidly became pneumonia: by May 5, 1861 he was dead. His illness came on so suddenly that his sister, occupied with moving, asked William Winter to stay with him. Winter sat up with Ned on the cold, rainy night before he died, trying to ease his labored breathing, and reading aloud from Carlyle and the Bible by Ned’s request. News of Ned’s death shocked everyone. Just when he was becoming well known for his plays and his drama criticism: “Everyone smiled upon him, and fortune was turning her wheel on his behalf, when – poof! – the candle was out!”356

Shock over Wilkins’ sudden death plus uncertainty about how the war would affect their lives caused the Bohemians to have short tempers around the long table at Pfaff’s. One evening, George Arnold, loyal to the Union but fond of creating excitement, toasted the Southern arms. Walt Whitman was furious, and jumped up and made a strong speech defending the Union. Arnold bent over the table, and pulled Whitman’s long beard. Others leaped in to separate them.357 That was the only time Whitman ever took part in a fight at Pfaff’s. His contribution to the Union cause would be to leave New York in late 1862 to nurse wounded soldiers in Washington, D.C.

When the first regiments were forming, one of those who eagerly joined up was the Irish-born writer and member of Bohemia’s “court circle,” Fitz-James O’Brien.358 He claimed he had served in the British army, and he certainly was a very good shot. Once O’Brien took out his pistol and shot three ornaments off the chandelier in quick succession in a New York restaurant, demonstrating how easily William Tell could have shot the apple from his son’s head. He took his shooting skills and enthusiasm for fighting to the new Seventh Regiment of New York volunteers which was made up of the sons of wealthy families. They took along their own band, costing them fifteen thousand dollars for three months. After virtually all New York turned out to watch their huge colorful parade they were sent to the defense of Washington, D.C. Once in Washington, O’Brien made fun of the dandies of The Seventh who liked their fancy uniforms, but missed hanging around Delmonico’s. Those dandies didn’t stay in when their three months enlistment was up, so, short of men, The Seventh returned to New York. O’Brien then decided to raise his own regiment to be called the McClellan Rifles, and rounded up recruits himself. Vanity Fair published a cartoon showing “Fists-Gammon O’Bouncer” dragging a hoodlum to his recruiting station.

He finally got a position as a volunteer aid on the staff of General Lander. He and Thomas Bailey Aldrich had applied for the same position, but the telegram of notification failed to reach Aldrich, so O’Brien took the coveted post. When word reached Pfaff’s that O’Brien was wounded in the shoulder in a skirmish with Southern cavalry in February, 1862, Clapp joked that “O’Brien has been wounded in Aldrich’s shoulder.” But no one was laughing when they heard later that O’Brien’s left shoulder had been smashed into fragments, and O’Brien was suffering terribly. The wound never healed properly, and O’Brien died of lockjaw on April 6, 1862, the Bohemian’s own war hero.

Although there were many deaths among the Bohemians, there was at least one new life. In early 1861, Lizzie Winter found out she was pregnant. At that time, she and William had to scratch around for writing jobs after the Press folded, and their writing didn’t bring in much either. Clapp came to the rescue, and found a job for Winter at the Leader that at least paid the rent at Ada’s. However, in April Lizzie returned to await their baby’s birth with her parents in Toronto. Winter continued to live at Ada’s home, but made repeated trips to Toronto where in November of 1861, Lizzie gave birth to their first son Percy.359 Ada wrote them she was thrilled that the Winters now had “arisen to the dignity of a son of their own” who might someday be Aubrey’s playmate, “I knew Lizzie would go through with it splendidly. Does the baby talk yet? If so mention my name to him!”360

By December of 1861, Winter had the opportunity (opened by the death of a Bohemian friend, Harry Neill in November) to become the drama editor for the Albion with his own column and department.361 Eventually in 1865 he would replace Edward M. House, dramatic critic and editor for Greeley’s Tribune. For fifty years after, he would have a strong voice about what was happening in the American theater. Ada was
helping Winter in his efforts to find larger quarters so he could bring Lizzie and Percy back from Toronto. But after one disappointment, Ada wrote to “My Dear Willie” that the Winters could always stay with her. Winter had borrowed some money from her, and she returned it writing, “I return to you what you call your obligation, & you will oblige me by never mentioning it again...I have had so much disinterested kindness shown to me in my life, which I never expect to be able to return in any manner or shape, that I don’t know why I shouldn’t be allowed to show the same to others.” She assured him that “your room is waiting for you & the beer always on tap.”

She wrote the Winters about rushing downtown to the theater determined to see everything. She had just gotten a writing job on the *New York Leader*, probably through the influence of Winter and Clapp, who had come to the *Leader* when the *Press* folded. The *Leader* was a Democratic paper that served the powerful politicians of Tammany Hall who controlled New York politics. Its editor John William Clancy was a sashem of Tammany and an old friend of Ada’s – a regular at her Sunday evenings. Ada’s new weekly column for the *Leader* covered the same range of subjects as those for the *Press* and she also helped Clapp with drama reviewing where he often used the pen name “Figaro.” Clancy allowed his Bohemian writers complete freedom of expression and plenty of space for their columns about the arts. Ada, felt quite at home among the Democrats at the *Leader* who sympathized with the South’s position. They were nominally loyal to Lincoln, though critical of many of his policies.

One loyal to the Union was Louis Moreau Gottschalk, but it was only Strakosch’s contract that enabled him to return to his native country in January, 1862, after five years away. He had accepted an offer of appearances in New York, and other Eastern cities, in a tour organized by Jacob Grau, Strakosch’s son-in-law. Before Gottschalk left Havana, he went to the American consulate and renounced fidelity to his birthplace, Louisiana, and swore allegiance to the government headed by Abraham Lincoln. His diary and efforts he made to help the Union during the war show him a strong supporter of both Lincoln and the Union.

Following Gottschalk’s successful New York debut on February 11, 1862, he introduced his stirring composition *The Union* in honor of Washington’s birthday on February 22. He first played it seated against a background of American flags at the Academy of Music, and the audience rose to their feet and cheered even though sated by a whole evening of opera excerpts. *The Union* gave a powerful boost to morale, and was ever after associated with Gottschalk’s name during the Civil War. Gottschalk called it a “musical fantasy;” in its introduction the music thunders like booming cannon and it incorporates themes of “Yankee Doodle,” “Hail Columbia,” and “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The musician was soon off on tour, and though he stuck to his classical repertoire, audiences always demanded *The Union*. During 1864, he would play it by request for President and Mrs. Lincoln, and General Grant. Most of his appearances were exciting for his audiences, but became a matter of routine for him. During the year of 1862, he estimated that he had given 85 concerts in four and a half months and traveled 15,000 miles by train. So robot-like did he become in his touring routine, he wrote in his diary that he had “the appearance of an automaton” and longed for his carefree days in the West Indies even as “his poor mechanism” ground out endless performances. His own description of his mechanical performances sounds much like Ada’s satire of him in her 1856 “Automaton Pianist” article in the *Atlas*.

When Gottschalk was in town, he and Ada traveled in the same circles, especially linked by their close mutual friendship with Henry Clapp. Gottschalk was known to feel at home at Pfaff’s, and he certainly appeared at Ada’s “Sunday Evenings” at least once. He bought a soldier suit for Aubrey, and sent tickets for his concerts. His actions denote friendship, not necessarily an acknowledgment of paternity, though as Aubrey later told Charles Warren Stoddard, the boy was sure the gifts meant Gottschalk was his father. Perhaps that was because Aubrey noticed something in Ada’s manner toward Gottschalk that was different from the way she acted toward her other male friends.

By early 1862 Ada was writing regularly for the *Leader*. On Fridays she filed her weekly column at the *Leader* office, chatted with Clancy the editor, and picked up her mail and other messages. Then she was off to Pfaff’s for a quick supper and brief visit with Clapp and others. John Burroughs, a young writer who adored her, waited around to see her on Fridays after Clapp told him her schedule. Burroughs was awed by Ada’s beauty: in 1862 he wrote, “She is really beautiful, not a characterless beauty, but a singular, unique beauty!” He winced when newcomers to the circle gossiped about Ada and were not as sympathetic about
her being an unwed mother as her old friends. Clapp tried to squelch rude comments about Aubrey’s lack of a father by joking that his birth was the result of an immaculate conception.

Meanwhile Clapp, who always admired Ada’s intellect and writing skills, encouraged her to supplement his theatrical column with her own writing about different aspects of the theater. This was in addition to Ada reviewing at least two new books and several articles from current periodicals like the *Atlantic Monthly* for her *Leader* column.

In her writing about actors, Ada thought Edwin Booth and Matilda Heron had the best acting style. She wrote they had brought an unusual appearance of naturalness to their acting, in an era of overblown histrionics. "Before [Heron’s] day … powerful acting consisted of inflating and collapsing the breast like a church organ for five minutes at a time … or pointing with extended hand to the fragments of a cherished letter.” Ada claimed that Heron, “with no movement, without raising her voice,” can move an audience by her “tone” and “the sheer intensity of her stage presence.”

She praised Edwin Booth’s performance as “Brutus” in *Julius Caesar* for his intellectual conception of the role, his stage presence, his action, and his use of facial expressions. In the part of the Roman nobleman Booth had to portray fear, surprise, enthusiasm, rage, and feigned madness: Ada thought his acting flawless. His ability to portray mood changes swiftly within one scene made “the very shape of his face change so suddenly it seemed as though a flash of lightening had torn from Brutus’s face the mask of folly, revealing the grandeur and dignity of former days.”

However, the popularity of certain plays fortified Ada’s belief that playwrights were not giving the finest actors the finest material. She was most concerned about the dramatizations of popular novels that were “at that time the prime fashion for the stage.” Even if they were good novels, she thought that the playwrights butchered them by “cutting slices out of the book, and stringing them together by artificial links”, rather than trying to “extract a concentrated essence of the spirit of the whole book, and constructing an actual play around that.”

Ada always loved to act herself, and took a small role in a hastily got-up play at the Old Bowery Theater. *Victory on Victory, or The Capture of Fort Donelson* told the story of the first important Union victory at Fort Donelson, Tennessee on February 17, 1862. Over the next several months, Ada began to take small roles in the company at the Bowery that was trying out new management. The Bowery was going through a transitional time. It had its greatest days from about 1830 to 1850 when it was located nearby its affluent audience; later managers began to present a series of melodramas and spectacles to please the now working-class neighborhood.

The most important concern for Ada as 1862 wore on was to live more cheaply because income from her investments was diminishing rapidly even as the cost of living was rising. Ada had to borrow more and more money from her lawyers. At first, she still had enough income to stay in the brownstone, though she had to dismiss her household help. Even so, she insisted the Winters stay on with free room and board when they had money problems. Finally the day came when Ada could not afford to renew the brownstone’s lease, and she, Zavarr, and the Winters separated to look for other housing.

By October, 1862, Ada and Aubrey moved into a room in the LaFarge House Hotel which connected to the rear of the Winter Garden theater on Broadway near Bond Street in Greenwich Village. Moving from a spacious house with its own backyard to a room in a hotel was quite a change. On the downside, hotel life was confining for three year old Aubrey, and made it necessary for Ada to spend much more time with him and curtail other activities. There was no safe place for a child to play outdoors like the backyard on 42nd Street, and probably few playmates. Ada took him along on whatever errands she could, and he must have become accustomed early to the hustle and bustle, and sights of the New York City streets. The busy hotel and the theater lobby full of transients provided a big change for a child who had been raised in a private household. He may have even seen a sensational fistfight in the lobby when an actor friend of Ada’s beat up another actor who had stolen his wife.

And yet there was an advantage to this new location. Now Ada would be back in the midst of her “beat” – within walking distance of theaters and other amusements, bookstores, art galleries, shopping, and Pfaff’s. The *Leader* office and the Academy of Music were only a short omnibus ride away.

Ada may have felt nostalgic about the theater next door; her theatrical career had started there when it was called the Metropolitan Theater. In 1856 she had been an ingénue in Laura Keene’s company there,
and played in *Antony and Cleopatra* in 1859, in the last performance under the name of the Metropolitan Theater. Later that year the theater was leased to Dion Boucicault, prolific playwright and actor-manager, in whose company Ada had ingénue roles in 1856. Boucicault made the theater more intimate by cutting the seating in half. He re-named it the Winter Garden, and copying its Parisian prototype, decorated it with live and artificial tropical plants. By 1862, many star players in popular plays were featured there.

Living close to this theater had many advantages for Ada. She loved “hanging about the theater.” She watched rehearsals, chatted with the players to learn the latest theater gossip, and nagged her old friend, manager William Stuart to find her a small part now and then to keep up her acting skills. Her need to take care of Aubrey and to turn out her weekly column for the *Leader* did not allow time for a large part, or for joining a touring company. She probably took Aubrey to some matinee performances, and attended evening theater performances after hiring one of the hotel maids to stay with Aubrey.

Among her activities, Ada often sat in on murder trials when the accused was a woman. Sometimes she was the only woman present. The Mary Real murder trial in October, 1862, however, had become a *cause célèbre* for those who supported women’s rights. Many women were present in the courtroom that sympathized with Mary Real, who had killed her husband Peter. Ada was one of the few that were seated within the enclosure near the lawyers and the defendant. Her presence was mentioned prominently in the *New York Times* reporting on the trial, identifying her as “Ada Clare, the popular columnist.”

Mary Real had shot and killed her husband on the afternoon of June 13, 1862, after seeing him that morning with another woman who was his lover. Peter Real had pretended to that woman that he was not married, and that Mary Real was pursuing him because she was emotionally disturbed. The Reals had been married for several years, but were not then living together. Their marriage had been on and off because Peter Real had abused her. Mary also suffered lingering guilt and depression because their marriage ceremony had not been Catholic; she had even tried returning to Ireland to make a new life. She came back to Peter Real because she loved him; he had given her financial support, and she hoped they would resume living together. Meanwhile, tired of the whole situation, Peter Real had found a new lover, and was trying to break off the old relationship.

Somehow Mary Real never lived happily with her husband, but couldn’t live without him either. She resented seeing him with his new lover, and in a jealous rage, she went out and bought pistols, went to his place of business, confronted him with his infidelity, then shot and killed him. The final verdict in her trial found her guilty not of murder, but third degree manslaughter. She was given what was then considered a merciful sentence: two-and-a-half-years doing hard labor at Sing Sing Prison.

Ada covered the trial in great detail in the *Leader*, October 18, 1862. Her column contains interesting details of how criminal trials were conducted then, but more importantly, raises questions about whether or not a woman could get a fair trial. How fairly could women defendants be judged when juries were all male, at a time before women were allowed to be among voters from which juries were picked? Ada also pointed out the unfairness of this judge’s remarks about whether or not Mary Real was of “good character.” The judge had hinted that perhaps Mary Real had committed adultery too when she lived apart from her husband. The defense got witnesses who testified that Mrs. Real’s conduct had been ladylike when living apart from her husband: she had been faithful to her husband.

However the judge’s remarks certainly prejudiced the jury, and even the prosecuting attorney thought the judge unfair. Mary Real’s character should not have been an issue in the trial, even though her sanity was. But the judge’s remarks were the final proof to Ada that no woman could get a fair trial in court. As for a woman’s reputation: “…it is so delicate a thing that to breathe on it, taints it.” It was easily destroyed.

The double standard was devastating. Ada noted that if a man had liaisons, he was a “good-natured, jolly fellow.” When a woman had liaisons, it was “a stone around her neck…she sinks down and down.” The community was sure to persecute her, and “[e]ver afterward the balance in which she is weighed will be weighted with that fixed dead weight which mere goodness cannot struggle against.”

Ada’s strong comments were certainly colored by her long-standing and often-expressed feelings that she had never been judged fairly by many, including her family members, because she was a woman who was open about her sexuality. She ended her article with the bitterest statements she ever made about relationships between men and women: “If some woman should shoot a man every day … until the end of creation, it would be paying them but a small subsection of the unnecessary misery and wanton suffering.
they have cost us. What is a mere painless murder of a man from time to time, to the slow deaths ... they put us through every day?” She felt that if a man and woman were in love though not married, the man could hurt her by his contempt, and “pass her by on the street, and forget her.” If a man and woman were married, “he could pour out on her his brutal nature from vice and excess, and corrupt her with the atmosphere he brings from the hells of his seeking.”

Gottschalk’s return had certainly refueled old gossip and reawakened Ada’s bitterness about the results of their liaison. Ada had difficulty forgetting that Gottschalk had rejected her even when she had given all her love to him in 1856. Surely these strong feelings toward Gottschalk could not have lasted for eight years unless he had hurt her greatly. Other comments in her columns show that she still had unresolved and conflicted love-hate feelings about him. She wrote only two music reviews amongst her many columns for the Leader and significantly, both were connected with Gottschalk. One reviewed a Gottschalk concert; the other reviewed his protégé, Teresa Carreño.

This lovely, talented eight-year-old virtuoso from Caracas, Venezuela made her first public New York appearance on November 6, 1862, at Irving Hall, closely followed by six more concerts. She was a huge success. Gottschalk had been tutoring her since September. After Carreño’s father lost his cabinet post in Venezuela, he brought his family to New York, and contacted Gottschalk who gave Carreño lessons. Gottschalk was amazed by her musical talent. For her part, child was so overwhelmed by him that she fainted the first time she heard him play. He would become one of the most important influences on her education, and helped bring her to the concert stage. Her early repertoire contained many of his compositions, as well as “The Gottschalk March” she wrote in his honor.

Reviewing Carreño’s highly successful concerts in the Leader, November 27, 1863, Ada praised her talent, and predicted for Carreño what did indeed happen: “A career whose brilliancy few artists ever attain.” Her legendary concert career would last until her death in 1917. Ada was impressed with her naturalness. Unlike some prodigies “forced like the fruit of a hothouse into an insipid maturity,” who played mechanically, Carreño’s “gift of nature bloomed as naturally as springtime flowers.” And when the child finished playing, she skipped off the stage oblivious to bouquets offered.

She had finished her concert with Gottschalk’s Jerusalem, his transcription from a Verdi opera, and Ada considered this a great test of Carreño’s skill because “this celebrated composer” (she did not have to mention Gottschalk’s name) wrote compositions generally considered “so difficult that no one but himself can execute them.” Worshipful though she was, Ada did not exaggerate. Gottschalk’s compositions for the concert hall were extremely difficult, and in playing them, he often added new material that made each performance unique.

However, in reviewing one of a series of Gottschalk’s concerts in the Leader, April 25, 1863, Ada was sarcastic, even though she acknowledged his concerts as “highly successful in every way, presenting the best of talent in the best way.” In the concert Ada reviewed, he was joined by three other women pianists, and Ada wrote: “the touching picture of Mr. Gottschalk surrounded by three more or less beautiful ladies was a sight to melt a pawnbroker to tears.” She did concede that the lady pianists all had talent.

At the end of 1863, Ada wrote two articles, “The Male Beauties of the New York Stage” and the “Female Beauties of the New York Stage,” for the December 12 and December 19 holiday issues of the Leader. These were short profiles that included physical descriptions of the most prominent theater and musical celebrities of the day. Most were two paragraphs or more: but under the heading “L.M. Gottschalk” she only had two sentences: “This is the finest face on this or any stage. As an artist, more than the name would be less.” Whatever their relationship was in the past or in the present, it had left her with feelings of great bitterness. Perhaps she may have preferred to shoot him, rather than snipe at him in her columns, but when it came to making a final statement about him, she still idolized his looks and his talent.

Perhaps she sympathized with him because 1863 had been a tragic year for him. Even while he constantly toured he had to take care of his invalid brother Edward who finally died of tuberculosis in October, 1863. And then too, she may have seen things in a different perspective by the New Year of 1864, when she herself was getting ready to leave New York to make a new life for herself and Aubrey in California. 1863 was a year of decision for Ada: many things happened that propelled her toward change.
Most things were not going the way Ada wanted, and she was feeling more and more restless, and starting to think about running away from New York. She not only disliked the way her smaller income constricted her lifestyle, but she resented many things about the war. By 1863, many on the home front were weary of it; Ada didn’t even want to read about it in fiction. She reviewed Rose Terry’s short story “Thanksgiving” for the *Leader* on March 28, saying it would have been more readable if the writer hadn’t “dragged the war into it. Nowadays writers seem to think that no plot, no incident, no style is necessary – it’s enough to make the hero go to war, and the heroine turn nurse.”

And then, even among those who supported the war, not everyone was thrilled with Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, freeing the slaves in areas rebelling against the Union. It escalated the kind of bad feelings Ada had that she had expressed in her writing before. In the *Leader*, March 22, 1862, she had described the story “Margaret Howth” as “slave fiction,” and called abolitionists “those howling idiots.” She thought it impossible to write about freeing the slaves without lying. Writers should be warned by what happened to Harriet Beecher Stowe after writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*: “What an intellect was there destroyed … the author of so many brilliant volumes is now the quintessence of dullness.”

Indeed Mott ascribes the mid-1863 demise of *Vanity Fair* only partly to the rising prices of materials and its lowered subscription price. He writes that with the progress of the war and the Emancipation Proclamation in January, 1863, the paper “was on the losing side when it devoted so large a part of its energies to decrying, however cleverly, the abolitionists and the Negro.”

By 1863, the group of Ada’s friends and supporters was diminishing, and the group who disapproved of her was increasing. Ada’s emotional security had always depended on being surrounded by friends and acquaintances who supported her writing and understood her way of life, particularly her position as an unwed mother. She also needed to dominate – to be “The Queen.” The newer writers at Pfaff’s not only gossiped about Ada’s sex life, but didn’t like her writing very much. They especially resented her negative reviews when her pen punctured their own egos, however well-deserved the negative reviews were. Even John Burroughs, who adored her, didn’t like the way she blasted Henry Abbey’s syrupy poetry collection, *May Dreams*. And yet Burroughs felt that her criticism was fair.

Ada missed seeing her closest friends daily. Now that she and the Winters lived apart, she didn’t get to see Lizzie and William very often. They were much worse off than Ada. They had to send money to help their parents, as well as support themselves and their son Percy. They changed lodgings often, could not afford boarding house meals, and did not even have kitchen privileges. They saved money by eating in cheap restaurants, and skipping lunch. Sometimes they had to leave Percy locked in their room when they both went out job-hunting. Finally when William got better paid newspaper work, and Lizzie sold a few stories, they could afford a good boardinghouse where the landlady looked after their child. As Lizzie said later: “It’s a wonder we survived – but youth is a wonderful stimulant!”

Next Marie left the country, after the long process of getting an amicable divorce from her first husband, Lyman Case. When she left the “Brownstone Utopia,” Marie had taken in her divorced sister, Ada Moulton (later Stockbridge) and her child, Mabel and supported their household as a school principal. When her sister made other arrangements, she and Edward Howland were able at last to acknowledge their longstanding love affair. They left for Europe together in 1863. Edward had lost most of his income from his family’s cotton brokerage during the war, and his savings from the sale of his rare book library supporting the *Saturday Press*. He now made a modest income traveling in Europe buying rare books for Philes and Company. For a while they were based in Godin’s Fourieristic community in Guise, France, and it was here that Marie began to do extended writing on social theories. The Howlands were not able to marry until 1864, and did not return to the United States until the war was over. Like almost all of Ada’s friends, except Whitman and O’Brien, they saw no need to get directly involved with the war. Unlike Ada, Marie was an abolitionist, but she and Edward felt that the way to a better society was through Fourieristic communal living.

Ada did get to see Zavarr once or twice a month because he still went down to her lawyer’s office to pick up her allowance for her. Having only himself to take care of, he was faring better than the Winters. He got a job editing an insurance trade newspaper that gave him enough financial security that he could turn out a few plays and poetry, but none of them ever achieved much success.
Now that Ada could no longer entertain in her own home, she missed having her wide variety of acquaintances under one roof at her Sunday night gatherings. Toward the end, she had had to economize by serving draft beer from a keg and crackers, but Lizzie remembered that they still had loads of fun and “much clever conversation.” Leaving Aubrey to go out was different when Ada had left him in their home with her own household help and friends rather than with a hotel maid in their room. Lack of money now made her cut out favorite activities like shopping and going to the hairdresser.

The group at Pfaff's seemed to be getting even smaller by 1863 — the latest Bohemians to leave had taken off for California— a mecca for anyone who wanted to escape the war, and make money. All the Bohemians who had gone there had been successful: Charles Farrar Browne as Artemus Ward, humorous lecturer and writer; Fitzhugh Ludlow, a Pfaffian notorious as drug addict and author of *The Hasheesh Eater*, and finally Ada’s close friend Adah Isaacs Menken, the Whitmanesque poet who had become more famous as an actress.

When Ada and Menken had first met in 1859, it was Ada who helped Menken when she was down on her luck. Now Menken had become wealthy and famous with her “star turn” as Mazeppa. She had gone west prepared to play that role and a few other “breeches roles” that enabled her to show off her shapeliness. From the time of her arrival in California in August, 1863, she received the biggest salary ever paid to an entertainer. Audiences overflowed the theaters wherever she played. In addition to this, she wrote for *The Golden Era*, San Francisco’s most prominent literary weekly, and was idolized by all the young, up and coming Western writers. One of them, Bret Harte, influenced by the New York Bohemians early on, even called his writings, “Bohemian Papers.”

Menken’s success and the kind of welcome given the Bohemians encouraged Ada to look to the West for new opportunities. It was fairly certain that Ada could get a writing job with the *Era*. The editor Joseph Lawrence followed the doings of the New York Bohemian writers closely, often printing articles by and about them. He had already welcomed and hired the Bohemian writers who had come west, and advertised their names often. After featuring work by Menken, Artemus Ward, Ludlow, and newcomer Charles Henry Webb, Ada’s friend from *Vanity Fair*, Lawrence boasted in the *Era*, January 17, 1864, that he had a corps of contributors “unequalled in the annals of literature … We purchased their pens and pencils before they had been an hour in California.”

At first Ada had given the idea of going to California some idle thought, but as the year with its discouragements wore on, she began to make more definite plans. And a horrible event, the New York City draft riots that lasted from July 13 to July 17, 1863 frightened everyone so badly, it may have convinced Ada that New York was not a very safe place to be. She had taken Aubrey to the seashore in June and not returned to New York until July 31, so fortunately she and Aubrey escaped actual physical harm.

The causes of the New York City draft riots that escalated into one of the bloodiest race riots in history were complex, and had been building since the beginning of the war. As the war progressed, many of the rich got richer on wartime profits, and, as the cost of living rose, the poor got poorer and more dissatisfied. More ill-feeling grew because of the great disparity between how rich and poor were affected by the federal Conscription Act of 1863, calling for a greater number of men than ever from New York City. A rich man could hire another man to take his place for $300. A poor man could not afford this, nor could his family afford to lose his wages after he was drafted for the army.

Furthermore the time was ripe for draft riots to turn into race riots because Irish and other day-laborers resented the competition of Negro freedmen now flocking up from the South. Fernando Woods and others made inflammatory speeches that whipped up the fears of the Irish about that competition for jobs. Many of them hated and resented blacks. After Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation January 1, 1863, the Irish did not want to leave their families to fight a war supporting freedom for blacks who they saw as their competitors in the market for low-priced jobs, the only ones available for newly arrived immigrants.

The riot began after huge, angry crowds gathered to read the list of conscripts’ names posted at the various headquarters for the draft lotteries. Things were quieter on July 11 but by July 13, the simmering anger fueled the first outburst, and trouble spread like wildfire. There were 50,000 to 70,000 rioters in small groups who roamed the city all the way from Union Square on the south, not far from Ada’s hotel, to Shantytown on the north. They smashed the draft lotteries, looted stores like Brooks Brothers, burned buildings, and completely disrupted the ongoing life of the city. No pedestrians were to be seen, and the
everyday sights and sounds of the city were gone. The air was filled with smoke from fires, shouts of the attackers, and screams of the victims. The mobs lynched some blacks on lampposts along main streets, and burned the large Colored Orphan Asylum building at 5th Avenue and 43rd Street. They also targeted leaders of the Republican Party and their property and tried to burn down the Tribune building, home of the newspaper and editor, Horace Greeley, so strong in support of Lincoln, the Republicans, and Emancipation.

Even 2,000 policemen with volunteer help and entreaties by Catholic clergymen could not stop the riot. Finally five regiments of the Union Army were rushed in from the field at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to join local forces struggling to take the city back from the rioters. Street battles lasted four days, one of the very last on the doorsteps of the sedate, upper class Gramercy Park neighborhood. It is estimated that about 105 were killed, and well over a million dollars of property was destroyed.

Many New Yorkers lived in fear of more riots. That was added to shock and despair over the news of over 50,000 Union and Confederate soldiers killed at the Battle of Gettysburg on July 3. Even though the Union was victorious at Gettysburg, and the battle was a major turning point in the war, many mourned the waste of lives, and wondered how much more bloodshed there would be before the war ended.

Before the Confederate forces were turned back, Gottschalk and his entourage were momentarily caught between the Confederate and Union forces at Harrisburg while touring in Pennsylvania. The group of musicians arrived to find everyone in the city running away on horseback, on foot, or by any other vehicle they could find. Gottschalk’s party was almost trapped, and if Gottschalk had not happened to find his cousin, Leonard Myers, a major in the Union army, on the scene, Gottschalk, his associates and his two boxed Chickering pianos never would have been able to get out by train before the battle started.

Gottschalk’s sense of humor did not desert him when he wrote up this incident later. He was happiest of all his pianos had not been captured “to feed the fire of some obscure Confederate soldier … who will see with indifferent eyes your harmonious bowels consumed without any of the regard … for the fidelity with which you have followed my campaigns in the West.” 384 This was probably Gottschalk’s only joke about the war, however. He wrote very compassionately about the suffering of all kinds he observed as he traveled around the wartime nation. He seldom rode a train without seeing wounded soldiers traveling home with their families, or being unloaded in litters while ambulances waited. Much of the time he traveled in the baggage car to keep an eye on his two boxed pianos, and shared space with coffins of soldiers taking a last ride home. Many portions of his diary with interesting accounts of his wartime travels were reprinted during the war.

Henry Clapp, Jr., became interested in Gottschalk’s account of the events at the front in Harrisburg, and reprinted it in several of his columns in the Leader in July, 1863. Clapp commented on Gottschalk’s near-capture: “I have heard a pretty, young blonde — herself something of a rebel in her way — say that if they bad captured him, the great pianist would have so charmed them by his music they would have been as harmless as so many home guards.” Knowing Clapp’s fondness for Ada, and his regard for her beauty both so often expressed in print, and observing the double meaning of his use of the word “rebel” here, I think Clapp was writing about Ada.

Though Clapp was one of Gottschalk’s truly close friends, his sympathies went out to Ada because of her feelings of having been badly treated by Gottschalk. Even earlier, September 6, 1862, commenting on Gottschalk’s series of concerts in the Leader, he wrote that Gottschalk’s playing lacked “soul.” He said that his playing had not had soul since he took his last déjeuner a la fourchette with “Arabella” in Paris. I believe this to be a reference to Gottschalk and Ada so cryptic that perhaps only they would understand it. What Clapp perhaps could not say in private to Gottschalk for fear of losing the musician’s friendship, he could hint at in the newspaper, and then claim he was only joking if Gottschalk objected.

This reference takes some explaining, and my explanation is conjecture. It is based on Clapp’s assumption that Gottschalk and Ada were together as intimates in Paris at some time, and that Gottschalk was Aubrey’s father. Assuming that, what would the name “Arabella” have to do with Ada? Clapp, Gottschalk, and Ada were all quite familiar with the life of George Sand including her intimacies with Chopin, and close friendships with Liszt and his mistress Marie, Countess d’Agoult. “Arabella” was George Sand’s nickname for the countess, a famous beauty, and writer of memoirs, who lived with Liszt for a while, and bore him three children out of wedlock. Ada had already been compared to George Sand, and
Gottschalk to Chopin. Carrying that sort of comparison one step farther, Clapp was here comparing Ada to another woman of the same circle, in this case the mistress of a composer who had also borne him children out of wedlock. And the expression *dejeuner à la fourchette* definitely has a sexual connotation beyond its literal meaning of an “informal picnic lunch.”

Clapp always championed Ada’s causes, and Ada kept the cause of Gottschalk’s treatment of her alive by her bitterness about the past mixed with worshipful adoration toward Gottschalk that hinted she still cared for him. This made Clapp all the more determined to get Gottschalk to take more notice of Ada. But it probably had the opposite effect of making Gottschalk uncomfortable when added to other renewed rumors about their old love affair, and Aubrey’s parentage. Gottschalk, however he treated Ada, was a proud, sensitive man who had carried a tremendous burden of responsibility for his brothers and sisters, and was also generous in many charitable ways. Public suggestions that he had hurt Ada, and not acted as a gentleman, would have caused him to shy away from Ada. After his brother Edward’s tragic death from consumption in October of 1863, he would no longer be tied down to touring near New York City to be more available for Edward’s care. Gottschalk speedily got together a new group of musicians, and soon left for a long tour to Wisconsin and Illinois, not arriving back in New York until February, 1864, just about the time Ada left for California.

By late fall, Ada was making definite plans to leave. Her move to a quiet boardinghouse on Abingdon Place in October was only temporary. She had hoped to be ready for her long journey and longer stay by the end of December, but was hampered by winter weather, and delays in financing her trip. However by the New Year of 1864, she publicized her leaving, making it sound like some kind of triumphant exit rather than a desperate attempt to make a more satisfying life for herself and Aubrey: “Ada Clare, dressed in her richest robes and furs is just bowing herself out … She has finished her writing and corrected her proof … she is going off to California. Take a quick look at her mobile expressive face … it is the last you will see of her for many a long day unless you are fortunate enough to secure her photograph.”

Just before leaving, she and Aubrey did sit for photographs at Glosser’s on Broadway. The pictures show both looking somewhat sad. Aubrey’s mixed sad, and sulky expression may have resulted from having to sit still for so long while the photographic plate was exposed in those early days of photography. The photograph is not in color but we know from Marie Howland’s descriptions that Aubrey’s straight hair combed back from his high forehead was blonde, and his eyes were brown. He is wearing a child’s version of a Union soldier suit buttoned up to a round neckline. It is probably the suit given to him by Gottschalk.

Ada has short, dark-blonde, curly hair worn with a half-bang over her forehead. Her eyes, sometimes described as “pansy-blue” look dark, and since she is facing front the effect of her “tip-tilted” nose is minimized. The portrait shows her elaborate lace collar with a large, gold-rimmed brooch. Her hair is slightly mussed – that and her last few hastily scrawled notes to her lawyers, saying how she was rushing around trying to get ready, belie the quietness of her face and her level, even gaze in the portrait. She, too, had to sit still long enough for the photograph. Otherwise she was impatient to get to California to see what her future would be. She would turn thirty in July 1864 –it was high time she found a satisfactory new place for Aubrey and herself.
CHAPTER 8: GO WEST NEW WOMAN –
TO CALIFORNIA

Ada had made careful preparations for her long sojourn in California. In late 1863, she wrote Joseph Lawrence, editor of San Francisco’s leading journal *The Golden Era*, which already reprinted the writings of many from Pfaff’s Circle, as well as the latest news about their activities. She sent several of her *Leader* articles and asked if he would hire her. He answered with a job offer, and also began to reprint her articles. Lawrence thought the *Era’s* audience might be ready for Ada’s sophistication. He anticipated his audience’s tastes would be changing even as San Francisco was changing from the “49ers” town of fire-prone shacks to a city with 1,000 new buildings downtown. After featuring several of Ada’s articles, the *Era* announced February 7, 1864, that Ada herself, “brilliant, talented, and accomplished,” was on her way to write for the paper in person.

Her preparations to leave were hectic. An unusually cold winter hampered gathering her “half-ton of luggage” including trunks, carpet bags, bandboxes, umbrellas, and even folding chairs. The day before sailing she visited her lawyers for final approval of her accounts, got letters of credit, and the $200 cash needed for their first class passage. The next day February 3, 1864, she and Aubrey struggled through the usual mobs on the pier at the foot of Warren Street to board their steamship *Illinois* of the Robert’s Opposition Line. Their twenty-one day voyage would carry them to San Francisco by way of Jamaica, and then the Isthmus of Panama, where they would cross by railroad to the Pacific side to board another ship for San Francisco.

At first the cold forced her and Aubrey to bundle in woolens and mufflers but after traveling south several days they “unwound their cocoons,” and enjoyed warm weather. Sailing was smooth except for a storm off Cape Hatteras where Ada claimed she was the only one not seasick. Ada ridiculed those ashamed to admit why they rushed to the rail, and wondered if they leaned over “to commune with mermaids.” A forty-hour stop in Kingston, Jamaica evoked Ada’s mixed feelings and ambivalent commentary. She liked the green hills, blue skies, and palm trees. Buying fruits like bananas and pineapples provided a treat she and Aubrey seldom had in New York. And yet other sights prompted her racist comments. She wrote of Kingston’s “tumble-down areas” full of “ignorant, gibbering, unmannered blacks,” the men sleeping in the sun, and the women doing hard manual labor. She called them barbaric brutes with no moral consciousness. She condemned the British political system for freeing them, thus causing the downfall of the planter class, and undoing the “prosperity of the fairest isle on earth.”

Though she had left the South forever, she was still in agreement with her family’s beliefs about slavery: that it was good for black people, who could not direct their own lives without white masters to control them and provide spiritual guidance with the white version of Christianity. Though she apologized for “metaphysical ramblings,” she did not apologize for her viewpoint. During her year away from New York she would often reveal her sympathy for the Southern cause. California supported the Union but, for the most part, tolerated those sympathetic to the Confederacy.

The next port was Aspinwall on the Atlantic seacoast of Panama where passengers awaited word of their ship’s arrival on the Pacific side. Ada noted the different way passengers from the Opposition Line were treated compared to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company’s passengers who arrived the same day. Those passengers were “turned out into the streets of Aspinwall” where they were mobbed by “hotel harpies.” There were many hotels, but a comfortable bed and good supper were hard to find, and cost “an exorbitant price.” But the Opposition Line’s *Illinois* passengers like Ada stayed on board in comfort with fine food, and could go ashore for sightseeing whenever they wished.

Though the captains of the two ships were business rivals they cooperated in hosting an entertainment for all passengers the night after arrival. Ossian Dodge, Ada’s old friend and fellow passenger, was an entertainer who was the star of the evening. To great applause he danced “or rather skated” across the
improptu stage of dining tables still “slippery from lingering traces of departed butter.” A dance and supper followed and the “next day was devoted to merrymaking too” until word came that the Opposition Line’s ship *America* was ready to board at Panama City on the Pacific side.

Ada, Aubrey, and the other passengers boarded the train the next day. Crossing the Isthmus took most of the day. Ada thought the train ride was “the Arabian Nights set to steam”, when she saw “wondrous native huts,” and a “sensuous abundance of torrid vegetation.” She was less happy with keeping track of their clutter of luggage. At Panama City sloops loaded with passengers took them several miles out in the bay to their ship. There was crowding and confusion as they boarded but Ada admired the captain who “splendid in white linen and panama straw hat towered above everyone, and shouted commands in his deep baritone voice,” and soon made order out of chaos.

Passengers could go ashore for two days before the ship left. Ada thought Panama City “old, sleepy, and dull,” though enlivened for her by the “great, luminous, black eyes” and attentions of the Panama correspondent of the *New York Herald*. The ship finally departed running close enough to shore for passengers to view the sub-tropical scenery, and “smoke from burning mountains.”

Many ships from all over the world came to San Francisco and any “steamer day” was a big event, but the arrival of steamers from the East coast, before the railroad spanned the continent, would bring the greatest crowds. Many waited for mail, or for Eastern newspapers bringing more details of events than the transcontinental telegraph could bring. Some were there because they just wanted to watch the big event. Sometimes the father of a family waited for the women and children that made up half of these passengers in 1864. Usually he had come first to dig for gold or try another business venture. So when Ada and Aubrey arrived they saw a huge, welcoming crowd.

After disembarking and gathering their luggage, Ada and Aubrey took a closer look at San Francisco. The harbor itself was a sea of masts that could be seen from downtown streets. The city spread from the edge of the harbor up low sand hills constantly buffeted by cold winds. At that time the population numbered 115,000 with 41 churches, 105 schools, 3 public libraries, 12 daily papers – many in foreign languages, and 231 dealers in whiskey. In 1864, San Francisco was only 15 years past the time gold was discovered at Sutter’s Mill. Gold had drawn the whole world to San Francisco, and created so much wealth that the frontier town had rapidly evolved into the more cosmopolitan city it was in 1864. Its citizens had access to drama, opera, and music. They flocked to lectures too, usually given in theaters and churches, but occasionally given in billiard parlors.

Ada and her son were soon settled at the Russ House Hotel, considered one of the finest new buildings in town. Ada expressed amazement not to find “bears roaming the streets,” but she wasn’t joking about her surprise at the splendors of the Russ House. She had expected “an overgrown boarding house,” so was impressed to find its “oriental splendors” as fine as the swanky 5th Avenue Hotel in New York City. She thought the rooms, hallways, and public rooms beautifully decorated, and praised the “elegant cuisine.” The three-year-old Russ House at 235 Montgomery Street was a solid place favored by prosperous farmers, miners, and merchants. On Montgomery or close by were other fine hotels like Lick House and the Occidental. There were also banks, the post office, newspaper offices, businesses, theaters, and restaurants around that area. Also nearby were the saloons, dance halls, and gambling houses of the wide-open “Barbary Coast.”

Several blocks away from the Russ House was the center of San Francisco literary activities – the offices of the literary weekly *Golden Era*. After Ada was settled, she visited the gorgeously carpeted and elaborately decorated offices. Reigning over the scene was editor Joe Lawrence, urbane, beautifully dressed, and genial, with a meerschaum pipe in constant use. He entertained his writers lavishly, even providing them a special bartender, the man who had invented the “Tom and Jerry” cocktail. Lawrence’s editorial policy since taking over the paper in 1860, was to please old subscribers like the miners and rural readers, but to add interest for the increasingly literate city readers by encouraging the best work of new young local writers, and by enlisting well-known visiting writers to contribute. The *Era* also printed material by other writers from the East and elsewhere. They even serialized “sensation” novels. As Franklin Walker recorded, "Each issue contained eight pages, measuring 15 by 22 inches carrying 6 columns printed in seven-point type. Thus each page of the *Era* contained at least 9000 words.” There was plenty of room for a real variety of stories, poetry, reviews of entertainment, and even columns from foreign correspondents.
Among the new writers, Bret Harte, Charles Warren Stoddard, and Mark Twain would become best acquainted with Ada. Bret Harte, born Francis Brett Harte, had come west from New York in the 1850s with his sister to join his widowed mother who had remarried and settled in Oakland. He worked as an editor and a schoolteacher before starting at the Era as a printer in 1860, where he was soon writing local news, short stories, and poetry. By 1864, he had developed into a skilled writer and editor though he was still four years away from becoming editor of the magazine Overland Monthly, California’s version of the Atlantic Monthly. His story “Luck of the Roaring Camp,” published in its second issue, marked the beginning of his nationwide fame and was perhaps the best example of his local color tales.

Charles Warren Stoddard had also come west with his family, and was a shy and sensitive young man just beginning to receive attention for his poetry in the Era and to believe he might become a writer. Mark Twain wrote for the Territorial Enterprise in Virginia City, and contributed to the Era. He wrote local news, and was already well-known for his humorous stories and exaggerated tall tales. He had been a printer, a riverboat captain, and had tried mining when he first came west from Missouri to Nevada with his brother, Orion. He was happy to escape the Civil War. Though he was making a name with the Territorial Enterprise in the Washoe, he too was not sure he was meant to be a writer. 1869 would be the beginning of his national fame with the publication of his Innocents Abroad.

These new young writers, though writing of the West, looked eastward for role models. They were particularly interested in the Bohemians after reading their writings and about their activities in the Era. Bohemians like Charles Farrar Browne as “Artemus Ward”, humorous writer and lecturer, and Fitz-Hugh Ludlow, the writer whose experiments with drugs led to his book The Hasheesh Eater, had recently visited and made a strong impression. Ada’s coming had been anticipated, and was welcomed by the Western writers.

It was also welcomed and probably had been encouraged by her old friend Adah Isaacs Menken who had come out in July, 1863 to make a huge theatrical success. Even Gottschalk noted in his diary when he came west in 1865 that his success did not equal Menken’s: “Miss Adah Isaacs Menken … has carried away with her fifty thousand dollars … you will easily understand that the chaste muse, sister of Apollo, can only go astray before this public enthusiastic over the nudities of Mazeppa.” That role that used her skills as a horsewoman, and showed off her body seemed to be a bigger bonanza to male audiences than the Comstock Lode. They admired Menken’s riding ability, and were entranced by the sight of a nearly nude woman on stage. The Golden Era both supported her as an entertainer and published her free verse that was influenced by Whitman. She championed Whitman in the Era, November 15, 1863, as well as writing other critical articles. The young writers worshipped her, were the first to dub her “The Menken,” and backed her as if she was a favored political candidate.

But Menken’s private life was not as successful as her public one. She may have looked forward to crying on Ada’s shoulder, because she was having difficulties with husband number three, Robert Newell, journalist and humorist. He had first helped Menken when she was down and out, printing her poetry and articles in the New York Mercury, where he was literary editor. Their friendship became love on his part. He proposed marriage, and she agreed despite her own lukewarm feelings for him. Despite her fame as an actress, Menken still craved the kind of respectability that came with marriage. But as soon as they married there was trouble because he wanted her to give up the stage and writing to stay home and be a housewife. They hoped their move to California would help their relationship, but things got worse between them when Menken was idolized and Newell was scorned. Newell was well-known as a humorist: his “Orpheus C. Kerr” columns were widely enjoyed, and had even been quoted by President Lincoln. But he was a foppish little man, and out West, all the other men thought he was a sissy. Menken was a better man than he was. To win a bet she dressed in men’s clothes, went with “the boys” for a drink in a Barbary Coast saloon, and even smoked a cigar. Privately, the unhappy couple made each other miserable. Thus Menken did especially need Ada’s friendship at this time.

When Ada arrived in San Francisco she found a note from Menken who had been playing to standing room only audiences in Virginia City since early February. Menken urged Ada to visit as soon as possible, but she had to postpone the trip until she settled in and began to write her column. Lawrence had a spot on the front page for her column, so Ada had to produce several thousand words each week. She was soon on
her way to visit local landmarks so she could write them up for the *Golden Era*. Visitors and local writers never seemed to tire of writing about San Francisco and obviously readers enjoyed the subject.

In the next few months Ada also wrote about the opera, theaters, races, and the circus, and also books and fashion. She also recycled some of her best columns from the past. She was a principal contributor to the *Era*, and tried to live up to its editor’s glowing praise of her talents in the *Era*, March 20, 1864: “As regards what is popularly and eccentrically known as the ‘Bohemia’ of newspaperdom, she is unquestionably a Queen in every essential of literary and social superiority … Ada Clare is the fairest and most accomplished lady ever associated with American journalism.” Though unsigned, these words were probably written by Bret Harte.

One of Ada’s first Western outings was to the new Cliff House restaurant on Point Lobos overlooking the Seal Rocks on the Pacific Ocean. San Franciscans and visitors alike drove there in gaily painted carriages to breakfast while enjoying the view from the deep windows, later going out on the wide balcony to watch the seals playing on the rocks. She wrote of seeing: “four or five hundred animals crawling and sprawling up on a rock … rolling themselves into balls, sobbing, gasping, bleating chirping, and barking … nicer than a whole hat full of conundrums, and funnier than President Lincoln’s jokes.” She was surprised by strong winds that “almost knocked her block off.” Driving back she described the wide-ranging view of San Francisco harbor as better than any view back East: “Here you begin life at the top of the ladder.” She called San Francisco “the great, thronging, busy, bright, and beautiful city, the incomparable monument of man’s will and skill, the great Memnon of labor, in whose every smile is read the rising of a new sun of hope for humanity.”

In a column next to Ada’s, “Tessa Ardenne” was not so complimentary about the city, but much more realistic according to other contemporary accounts. She complained of the difficulties of San Francisco’s climate and steep hills. She said walking up hilly streets would “tax a Hercules,” that the wind blew “like a hurricane,” and the evening fog was “thick enough to cut.” Later Ada would agree, and complain of the “rude winds” that bothered her neuralgia, but at first she was determined to like San Francisco, and do everything to make San Francisco like her.

Women columnists were supposed to report on the fashion scene, so she observed the daily fashion parade at Montgomery and Kearney that had the largest retail stores, and was the city’s chief shopping center. Ada noted that although narrower hoopskirts were being worn in New York and were more sensible, San Francisco ladies still preferred wider hoops and because of this, “the ladies still gratuitously sweep the streets … Fashion in that respect is cruel to the lady and the dress.” There were plank sidewalks on Montgomery, but after crossing a muddy street, Ada noted her skirts were more “garbage than garb.”

When she visited Austin’s, the oldest dry goods establishment in the city, in search of fashion news, they generously allowed her to examine the merchandise and ask questions. A favorite western saying was that “New York dresses better than Paris, and San Francisco better than New York.” After looking around Austin’s, Ada agreed that, “California ladies insist on having the best of everything and do not much care about price.” For example black lace shawls sold there from $200 to $600 and a “modest Russian sable cape” was $1,000. Ermine capes were also sold in that price range.

In another column she called attention to Robinson’s Gym Classes that offered “light gymnastics for ladies and gentlemen.” She condemned the fashion for “tight lacing and tight boots” that kept women from outdoor exercise, and praised the new gymnastic movement “for establishing the fact that women have a right to be healthy,” and encouraging women to exercise to do so. She discussed cases of male brutality to women where invariably the woman was physically weak and in ill-health. Ada believed women would have more control over their own lives when they no longer equated femininity with being sickly. Turning to a lighter tone, she warned bachelors that because the classes were coed, their hearts might be stolen by female classmates in the “bewitching attire” of gym bloomers “so graceful and natural as to be irresistible.” No “tight lacing and tight boots” for them.

Many of her columns for the *Era* dealing with women’s concerns were humorous. She reprinted one from the *Leader* called “The Man’s Sphere and Influence,” reversing the Victorian tradition that assigned the world to the sphere of men, and the home to women. She wrote: “It grieves me to see so many men out by themselves without anyone to take care of them and expressing their opinions without asking any lady’s leave.” As for male writers, while she admired their writing, she sardonically noted that it always
pained her “to see a man exposing himself to public remark, and to the gaze of women by coming publicly forward in print. The sacred precinct of home is the real sphere of man. Modesty, obedience, sobriety are the true male virtues.”

A large part of Ada’s column was taken up by reviewing “Amusements.” Her job as a theater reviewer was easier because she was already familiar with the New York theater world, and many of its players and plays eventually reached San Francisco. She reviewed performances at the chief theaters, the Metropolitan and Maguire’s Opera House where audiences enjoyed melodramas like Rosedale, Leah the Forsaken, and Uncle Tom’s Cabin, or farces like Toodles and The Serious Family. Among the famous players of the day who appeared in San Francisco at that time were Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, Julia Dean, and Emily Jordan.

There was even an Italian grand opera company at the new Academy of Music at Montgomery and Pine Streets built by colorful Tom Maguire, ex-cab driver, saloon keeper, and crony of Tammany Hall in New York City. Maguire had come west with the 49ers, and had become the theater czar of California, controlling the entertainment that had already spread from the Bay Area out into the mining camps. However, his real passion was opera, though San Francisco audiences were cool toward it and enjoyed other amusements more. The Circus was always crowded, and at Eureka Minstrel Hall, minstrels constantly changed their bills, adding skits like “The Rebel Privateer,” and new songs like “Brother is Fainting at the Door.” At Platt’s Music Hall, Ossian Dodge, who had come west with Ada, was at first a hit portraying “eccentric characters, male and female, in great variety without any change of dress.” But audiences soon grew tired of him. San Francisco audiences had matured since the day in the 1850s when the signal of an approaching steamer was heard during the fifth act of a play, and the audience deserted the theater leaving the surprised actors alone on the stage.

By the 1860s, they had learned to stay put for a whole performance, but they constantly wanted something new. In regard to this, one columnist complained, “If St. Cecilia, Cicero, and Demosthenes consented to do the audience’s favorite play, and sing between the acts too, San Franciscans would say ‘those old things – they can’t be expected to draw audiences very long.’”

The mention of Cicero and Demosthenes highlights the fact that San Franciscans loved orators. However, Ada wrote of a disappointing Civil War orator, a last minute addition at Maguire’s Opera House. He was announced as “a gentleman on his way to the Potomac who would give an original address on the war.” Next, “He rushed out with extended left arm, disheveled hair, eyes lit up with a noble frenzy” and proclaimed, “cussed be he the traitor!” The audience started howling, but he continued louder and louder. “An enthusiastic critic” started throwing oranges at the speaker, and “the outraged stage manager removed the slighted orator.” Ada predicted he would be immensely helpful to the Army of the Potomac if he would march in front of their forces and deliver his oration to their enemies since “they will certainly all run away.”

Ada became bolder in her next column, risking comments that some of her California audience might not like. After observing Californians “in the drawing room, at table, in the theatre,” and elsewhere, Ada wrote: “They seem to be people without any remembered Past” except for “a confused sense of having been born in some other place at some vaguely remote period.” There was something about their facial expressions, tone of conversation, and movements that suggested “matured human beings … created of the Present exclusively … whose entities are all in the present hour, and inseparable from the present place.” She wondered if she would become one of “The Pastless” by staying in California for a long time.

She continued by using her column to do some sorrowful reminiscing. Though she was in a place where she could have left her past behind, she could not stop writing about her past woes in her column. She rambled on, cataloguing the “dreams and doubts of youth,” and “the death of ‘old hopes.’” Even as she claimed “old griefs” seemed less important now, she dwelled on one --her feelings about someone she loved that had disappointed her. The feelings expressed in “To Whom,” the poem ending this column, seem to be addressed to Gottschalk. Ada clutched her old griefs, perhaps assuring herself that at least she had had one Grand Passion in her life. There did not seem to be a new one on the horizon to blot out those old, sad memories.
“Wait, watching ever, was’t a day, a week,
A month, a year, or was’t a cycle in
the sterile Void of Life? No matter since
I waited out my whole of hope, of faith,
You say you came at last – you came too late;
Too late, you’ve come too late, your widest love,
Could not fill up the great,
bleak pauses of my life.” 422

Following this column she prepared to go to Virginia City. Writing about the trip and the Virginia City scene would make good copy, and she wanted to help her friend Adah Isaacs Menken deal with her disappointing marriage. After finding someone to stay with Aubrey, she was on her way.

In 1864, Ada made the trip from San Francisco to Virginia City by steamboat, railroad and stagecoach. 423She boarded the luxurious Chrysopolis on the Sacramento River and was not exaggerating when she wrote: “Its staterooms are all bridal chambers where elegance is married to comfort.” The river steamer had been built nearby and was the pride of the “golden city” of its name. It had a white exterior, white and gold interior, and grand three-tiered reception rooms filled with huge paintings of California scenes of the Sierras, Yosemite, and Monterey by well-known landscape artist Albert Bierstadt, and other western painters.

Next came a “short journey on the cars” of the Central Pacific to Placerville, and then the longest part of the journey via Pioneer Stage Lines on a large Concord Coach via the Placerville Road, a well-traveled route around Lake Tahoe running over the rugged Sierras to Virginia City in the “silver wilds of Washoe.” Ada was impressed by the view as the road ascended “winding about on the side of a precipice,” with the valley so far below that “the trees looked like chessmen.” She thought the best part of the ride was the journey along the eastern shores of Lake Tahoe, “at an altitude of six thousand feet above the sea … and more heavenly blue than the heavens themselves.” She thought American scenery so marvelous she wondered why tourists went to Switzerland: “Let others sing the glories of Lake Geneva and the Alps;” Ada could be content with Lake Tahoe and the Sierra Nevadas. She especially enjoyed being the only female passenger among eight gentlemen, including a “charming actor friend.” All the men “vied with each other in courteous and kindly attentions”, which included offering their overcoats when she was chilled by the mountain air. However their notion of her female delicacy must have shattered when she battled with the stage driver because he refused to let her ride with him on top the stagecoach. She wanted a better look at the scenery but the driver “distinctly intimated that passengers in crinoline were inclined to squeal … with piercing soprano notes” at the beauty of the scenery, and that kind of noise scared the horses!424

Ada was her usual feisty self, but not very sensible in arguing with one of the stage drivers. It was quite difficult for these brave, skillful men to drive the huge Concord coaches over the narrow, precipitous Sierra trails. Disastrous accidents with coach and passengers plunging to the canyon floor did happen. Nothing could be allowed to distract the horses.

Virginia City, Nevada425 was located a hundred miles east of Sacramento on the slanting slopes of Mount Davidson, directly over the heart of the Comstock Lode, the richest deposit of gold and silver ever found. Over 30 years a city grew there larger than any other in the West except San Francisco and Salt Lake City. When word got out about its mining potential in 1859, fortune hunters poured in, and by 1863 the city had about 30,000 inhabitants and the mines produced about $25,000,000 each year. “It had churches and theaters, ministers and prostitutes, a water shortage and other signs of civilization.”426

It was silver from the Comstock that brought continuing prosperity to San Francisco just as the Gold Rush had. As Franklin Walker wrote in San Francisco’s Literary Frontier: “Virginia City was built by San Franciscans, its capital, its banks, its lawmakers came from San Francisco” and, in turn: “The silver bars poured into their forms in the Comstock were consigned to the mint in San Francisco, and the fortunes made on the Comstock were spent in San Francisco bringing prosperity to that city.”427 Ada arrived on one of the three daily stagecoaches connecting the two cities. San Francisco supplied all of Virginia City’s necessities plus theatrical entertainment. Its literary influence on Virginia City was strong. The Territorial
Enterprise, one of the city’s most important newspapers, was owned and edited by Joseph T. Goodman and Denis McCarthy who were former staff members of the Era.

Ada described Virginia City as “all longitude and no latitude” because of the “mountain and valley that will not let it out sideways.” 428 As Mark Twain put it: “The mountainside was so steep the whole town had a slant to it like a roof.” 429 She thought it a “virile young town” with its “ceaseless rumble of ore wagons, and its everlasting roar and surge of mills.” However she missed seeing trees, shrubs, or even a blade of grass. Not just its mineral wealth but also the yellow alkali dust that settled over the town made Ada think of Midas touching Virginia City and turning everything to gold — or silver. She wrote of meeting “the two celebrated ‘Washoe Wits,’ Mark Twain and Dan de Quille. They had located “the best claims for humor in the country” and worked them well, “developing more and more richness; and unlike the mineral mines, have produced nothing but pure gold.” 430

Dan de Quille was the pseudonym of William Wright, 431 humorist, journalist, and later historian of the Comstock Lode. He and Mark Twain met working on the Territorial Enterprise in the early 1860s. Like Twain, he was unsuccessful as a miner and drifted into newspaper work, but he was already city editor when Twain first came to the paper. They were roommates and friends, and took turns playing rowdy pranks on each other that were reported in the Era and became part of Comstock legend. Twain learned how to write western style tall tales from de Quille, and eventually Twain’s style of exaggeration and macabre humor in his “hoaxes” outshone de Quille. Twain left and later became famous, but de Quille stayed on and saw the decline of Virginia City. The two remained lifelong friends, however, and Twain eventually published de Quille’s Big Bonanza, a good history of mining on the Comstock. When Ada arrived in April, 1864, they were still at the peak of their notoriety as the “Washoe Wits” just before Twain would leave for newspaper work in San Francisco.

But Ada disliked one of Twain’s humorous pieces, “Those Blasted Children,” published in the Era in 1863 and later reprinted in the New York Sunday Mercury. In it Twain devised fiendish remedies for children’s illnesses, especially intended for the children who disturbed Twain by running up and down the halls of the Lick House Hotel in San Francisco. Perhaps Ada was thinking of her own difficulties living in a hotel with a lively youngster like Aubrey in New York as well as San Francisco when she said she did not like the way Twain wrote about children. “Twain is funny, of course, but he is guilty of misunderstanding God’s little people.” 432

Ada wrote nothing else about her visit to Virginia City except a description of the trip back to San Francisco. Perhaps she neither wanted to reveal details of Menken’s marital problems, nor report on the amusements of Virginia City, which included theater, gambling, dance halls, bear fights, bull fights, and dog fights. Except for theater, it was not Ada’s scene at all. Menken had tried to provide some social life for her friend by giving a special party which Dan de Quille wrote a lively description of in the March 19, 1893 San Francisco Examiner. Menken invited Ada, Mark Twain, and de Quille for a literary get-together with lavish refreshments on a Sunday afternoon in her suite at the International Hotel. Though literary, Menken’s husband Robert Newell was not invited, and roamed the hall outside hoping to get a glimpse of the party when the door opened.

Menken had as easily established herself as writer as well as an actress in Virginia City as she had in San Francisco. Her poetry had been printed in the Territorial Enterprise, along with their rave reviews of her theatrical performances. According to de Quille, Menken and Mark Twain had exchanged manuscripts, and Twain welcomed her criticism saying, “She is a literary cuss herself.” Menken confided to Twain and de Quille that she had half a mind to “leave the stage and turn her mind to literature.” Perhaps she might settle down in Virginia City. She was contemplating a realistic novel, and wanted to talk more about it with “the boys” on a Sunday afternoon when they were off duty.

Menken thought beautiful, sophisticated Ada, being “The Queen of Bohemia” direct from Pfaff’s Circle in New York, would be an asset for a literary salon. De Quille was impressed by Ada’s beauty; he remembered her as a pretty, petite blonde “with a wealth of fluffy golden hair.” But he also remembered that Ada talked of nothing but her desire to go on the stage in San Francisco. She nagged Menken to get up a new play for her, and get her a booking from Tom Maguire, who controlled the main theaters in San Francisco, Virginia City, and many small mining towns. Maguire had made a fortune by bringing Menken and her version of Mazeppa to the West. Surely he wouldn’t mind helping Menken’s friend Ada? Perhaps
Ada thought Menken would more readily agree to her request because she wanted to impress “the boys” with her generosity.

Menken’s book was forgotten as she and Ada discussed Ada’s dramatic future, while the men devoured the marvelous food brought by a procession of waiters moving up and down the two flights of stairs from the kitchen. It took over three hours to serve all the courses, and they ignored the angry Newell still roaming the hallways. Meanwhile champagne flowed: it roused the men, at first very bored, to become more sociable. Someone suggested singing, and they all chimed in, but De Quille remembered that “The Menken was no nightingale, Clare was a sort of wren, and I was a screech owl!” So Twain soloed with the only song he knew: “There was an old horse and his name was Jerusalem” which repeated itself in endless verses. To add to the din, Menken’s nineteen yapping lap dogs rushed in from another room. She and Ada tried to quiet them by feeding them cubes of sugar dipped in champagne but though the women and De Quille laughed at the dogs, Twain did not like being in the middle of canine chaos. One of the dogs took “an unwarranted liberty” with one of Twain’s legs. Guessing at the dog’s location under the tablecloth, Twain kicked at it, but instead connected with “The Menken’s pet corn.” This caused her to “bound from her seat, throw herself on a lounge, and roll and roar in agony.” Though Menken was in pain, Twain started sulking. In the end Menken apologized for being upset, but Twain remembered a “pressing engagement,” grabbed De Quille, and departed. They still had to pass Menken’s husband in the hall, who responded to their salutations with scowling and muttering. As a result of this fiasco, though there were some “literary critters” in Virginia City, Menken abandoned plans for a literary salon because of lack of interest.

Returning home to San Francisco, Ada complained bitterly about her route. Because of snow in the Sierras, she had to take the Henness Pass Route bypassing Carson City and connecting with the Donner Pass Route to Sacramento. Instead of the comfortable Concord coaches, mud wagons were used for safety’s sake. The mud wagon was to her “a vehicle of torture” that jolted along for 200 miles until it reached a railroad depot “over a road of “ruts, ridges, crevices, and fissures … that seemed to have been waves of a tempest-tossed sea suddenly petrified into land.” She softened her complaints by saying she realized she should be grateful “to the bridge that brought me safely over.” To make matters worse she came down with a dreadful cold on the journey.433

Ada was probably still miffed at the editors of the Territorial Enterprise for trying to make trouble between Ada and her close friend, Adah Isaac Menken. At least that’s the way Ada perceived it. The editors had printed in the Enterprise an excerpt from one of “Tessa Ardenne’s” columns in the Era, attributing it to Ada writing under that pen name. Ada wrote them that, “I have never written over such a signature & and I. . .never did and never will write in such a spirit of self-righteousness…Having known & esteemed Miss Adah Isaacs Menken long before my appearance on these shores, I had no reason to feel the great curiosity it expressed ‘to see the being who had created such a flutter.”434 Although I cannot identify the author behind the pen name “Tessa Ardenne”, her column in the Era was long-running, and Ada’s only ran for several months. “Ardenne’s” columns do not read like anything Ada wrote.

In the next issue of the Era, “Henness Pass,” an unidentified journalist who used this pseudonym only once, wrote a column in the form of a letter to Ada answering her charges about the Henness Pass route and the mud wagons. “Henness Pass” wrote that it expected women to be kind, and Ada was very unkind. Furthermore it pointed out that when Ada had come out to Virginia City, she was able to travel by comfortable Concord coach only because of fine weather. When it snowed, the safer, though less comfortable mud wagons were used on all routes. “Henness Pass” reminded her that since its route had opened two years ago, it had been used safely by over one half of all stage passengers. Travelers who were western residents and not “transients” preferred it. Finally “Henness Pass” told her he liked her other writings because they were “jolly,” and added “keep writing well,” but warned: “Go slow … you’ll understand us as you live here and learn us.” 435 The comments of “Henness Pass” might have been just a humorous comeuppance for Ada if they had not pointed out something about her writing that would affect its acceptance by a western audience: she was a “transient” from the East. In her New York literary world she was acclaimed as a writer by other journalists, and the readers of the Saturday Press and the literary and drama columns in New York Leader-- a literate and select group. But Ada’s western audience was different. Cosmopolitan San Francisco still carried remnants of its frontier days, and anyone from the East had to take that into account when writing...
for the Era’s audience. Some of its members were already as literate and conversant with the arts as Ada’s New York audience. However, even among those who had “struck it rich,” there was still not a majority who had learned to really appreciate the finer things like literature, theater, and music, or Ada’s writing in reviewing them. As a commentator wrote, “If the prospector, mountain man, or cattle king be scorned because he reckoned culture by weight and bulk, or recognized beauty only when certified by convention, it must be added that he was faithfully striving for better things.” Ada’s writing had been strongly influenced by her education, opportunities to travel, experience with literature and all the arts, and exposure to other bright minds. Even her humor grew out of that background, and depended on puns and literary allusions. Perhaps it had only been editor Lawrence’s wishful thinking that there was a large audience for Ada’s writing in San Francisco.

The predominantly male Era audience still included rural miners who were often educated in “the college of hard knocks” and who did not value writings by “literary ladies.” They thought women’s writing was meant for women to read, and that included Ada’s writing. But Ada’s work did not fit in with the Era’s efforts to please the ladies with serialized “sensation novels” and sentimental poetry. Franklin Walker noted in his study of the era that most of the routine writing meant for women was done by women, and was poorly done with few exceptions.

By the 1860s, there were more women published than in the past, even though men still outnumbered women by 5 to 1, but few had leisure time for reading the Era, and among those probably not many could appreciate Ada’s column. Her fellow writers were finally her most receptive audience.

But her male colleagues enjoyed teasing her. After “Henness Pass” scolded Ada for her unfeminine hardhearted criticisms, “Inigo,” the pen name of regular columnist Charles Henry Webb, teased Ada about this in a column titled “Lady Clare.” He mentioned the complaints of “Henness Pass,” and said Ada was a “critic fair” in every sense of the word, though he did not agree with Byron’s “discourse on critics:”

… as soon … Believe a woman – or an epitaph,
Or any other thing that’s false, before
You trust a critic who themselves are sore.

Webb said he hoped Ada would not be angry at him because “I do believe a woman occasionally.” He was a fellow Bohemian from New York who also had trouble with the mindset of his western audience. His weekly column “Things” was well-written and fairly popular and he used the device writing it in the form of a letter to one or another of well-known San Franciscans. However, he sometimes made unkind comments about westerners often satirizing “forty-niners, patriotism, and literacy.”

Back east Webb had written for the Times, and, like Ada, worked on the satirical revue Vanity Fair. He never was wild about the West, but he helped to start the literary magazine The Californian in 1864. It lasted four years. To begin with it aimed to publish higher quality work than the Era, planning to use only original work by new western writers. It featured Bret Harte and Mark Twain; Ina Coolbrith and Charles Warren Stoddard contributed poetry. However the magazine eventually offered much the same fare as the Era, including reviews of entertainments, and serials of sensation novels. It is unknown whether Webb asked Ada to write for the new magazine. However, as the literary editor of the San Francisco Bulletin, he probably helped her get an assignment to write travel letters from Hawaii. But it would not be until several months later in July, 1864, that her restlessness would drive her to leave San Francisco and try yet another new place.

Many things made Ada wonder whether her writing in the Era would ever be truly appreciated. She began to realize that if she wished to please a western audience, she needed more time to learn their likes and dislikes, as “Henness Pass” suggested. But did she want to stay around long enough to learn? Perhaps sensation novels were popular, but she wrote columns criticizing them: she did not want to start writing them. And what about her style of humor? She didn’t want to change it. But Ada’s humorous comments such as expecting to see “miners developing babies as well as gold” in the cradles they used in their mining production, may not have seemed funny to her western audience.

Her readers did respond to her by sending letters, many of them anonymous. Some said she expressed her opinions too strongly for a woman. One said that writers were expected to look shabby, and
thought Ada’s white bonnet trimmed with tea roses and matching white cloak were too showy. She was accused of making her late entrances into the theater so dramatically that she distracted the audience from the performance. It was suggested she was a man using a woman’s name. Some asked her for help. In response to one letter asking her advice about romance, Ada even wrote an advice column. 445

It would have taken much more than Ada’s advice to the lovelorn to patch up the failing Adah Isaacs Menken-Robert Newell marriage. When Menken and her husband returned from the Washoe, Newell left for New York almost immediately, and news got out that the pair planned to divorce. Menken gave her final triumphant performances in San Francisco during April, 1864 before leaving for New York to sail toward more triumphs in Europe. Ada would miss having a close woman friend nearby.

Before her departure, Menken talked to theater czar Tom Maguire, and persuaded him to give Ada a good acting role in a major production. After some negotiating, Maguire and Ada planned her performance in *Camille* for the Christmas season, 1864. Maguire was known for giving new performers a chance, and Ada led him to believe she was a novice. Because she was beautiful and notorious, Maguire probably thought she might draw crowds as easily as she created controversy. The Christmas season drew crowds regardless.

She certainly drew attention in spring of 1864, when she reviewed another’s performance of *Camille*. Some journalists called Ada immoral for praising the character of the heroine, a woman of “easy virtue,” and condemning as narrow-minded any woman who thought “the divine triumph” of a woman like Camille was bad for virtue and morality. But the California Ledger and the Era rushed to her defense as her colleagues in New York always had. The difference this time was that her supporters suggested that Ada’s meaning had not been understood because her column was not read carefully, and that her attackers were principally motivated by Ada’s being from the South.446

Writing for the Era, and the weather in California were becoming burdensome for Ada. Writing a completely new column each week was so difficult that she began filling in more and more with pieces she had already published in New York. Aubrey, now almost five, was a handful, and she complained in her column about the difficulties of getting good help to care for children. She had to take him with her everywhere, and she scolded San Franciscans for being rude to children in her Era column, June 19, 1864, broadening her remarks to include a protest against child abuse and neglect.

But what would Ada do next if she left San Francisco? She was not yet willing to undertake the long journey back to New York. She was on the brink of the Pacific Ocean, scared to death from the latest earthquake, with her ears burning from the remarks of western readers who did not appreciate her, and editorial writers who not only condemned her morality but would never approve of her because she was “secesh”. And Ada needed approval as she struggled to make a new beginning in San Francisco. She may have wished for the same acclaim for brains and beauty that she got when she first came to New York from Charleston in 1854. But she was no longer the 20-year-old new girl in town. She would be 30 in July and she was having difficulty making a satisfactory life for herself and her son.

She was also having severe headaches from what she called neuralgia. Charles Warren Stoddard, who was becoming Ada’s close friend at that time, believed that the chilly, damp, windy climate of San Francisco had been “too harsh for her already delicate physique.” What she called neuralgia may have been further episodes of migraine headaches she had before, now aggravated by cold and emotional stress.

Perhaps Ada’s need to be idolized explains the beginnings of her close attachment to budding poet Stoddard. This young man just starting out in the literary world idolized everybody who seemed to have “made it,” and he wrote later of Ada that “she was in my eyes a remarkable woman, and in the eyes of youth remarkable women magnify themselves a thousand-fold and are objects of extraordinary interest.” He, like so many others praised her beauty, but noticed something new. Her face now had an expression of “sadness in the eyes,” it showed “world weariness,” and even “pathos.” Time and disappointments were taking their toll. 447 It was time to move on to a warmer atmosphere.
CHAPTER 9: THE QUEEN OF BOHEMIA
IN THE COURTS OF HAWAI'I

Blonde, boyish, sensitive, easily impressed and kind, Stoddard might have seemed like a lightweight figure, but proved to be a true friend and supporter of Ada and Aubrey. He first met Ada at the Era office, and soon was escorting her to the charity balls that were the mainstay of social life in wartime San Francisco. She loved to dance with Stoddard and their mutual friend Ralph Keeler, vagabond journalist and academic who also wrote a column as “Alloquiz” for the Era, and stuck up for Ada when criticism was unfriendly.

At this time in spring of 1864, Stoddard was attending a small college in Oakland, but he could not complete his assignments, and his anxieties led to a nervous breakdown. Ada, always interested in encouraging younger writers and especially those who looked up to her, was a thoughtful and supportive friend to him, and encouraged him to continue writing poetry.

By summer Stoddard’s family, hoping to improve his health, arranged a stay for him in Hawai‘i where his sister was married to a wealthy planter. By this time Ada was planning to go to Hawaii herself, and Stoddard arranged for her and Aubrey to stay at his friend’s place near Honolulu, believing that the warm Hawaiian climate would help her health. Meanwhile the San Francisco Evening Bulletin hired her to write travel letters.

Hawaii with its warm weather and mild breezes was a popular destination for the few who had the money to get away from San Francisco’s chill winds and fog. It was 2,200 miles and a fifteen-day voyage away by sail, and had always had close links to San Francisco. Gold-rush-era San Franciscans had sent their laundry there to be done – much faster than sending it back East!

On July 16, 1864, Aubrey and Ada boarded the bark Onward, of the Hawaiian Packet Line bound for Honolulu on the island of O‘ahu. There were 24 other passengers on board and a cargo of molasses. Among the passengers was an actor acquaintance of Ada’s, Walter Leman, who admired her writing and enjoyed her company on ship. He liked her “devil-may-care spirit;” that attitude of not caring what people thought reminded him of Adah Isaacs Menken, who he acted with in Virginia City. He also admired Ada’s “lithe form, lovely complexion, and superabundant wealth of massy blond hair.”448

They had a pleasant sail with winds in their favor, and sighted land by July 30,1864. They docked in Honolulu on July 31, just in time for a huge celebration of Hawaiian Independence. The city was decorated with flags, and full of crowds in a holiday mood. Ada was especially impressed with the verve of the native women pa‘u horseback riders. They wore red and yellow cloth bound around their waists and legs that trailed off into streamers. They were a colorful sight tearing down the roads in full gallop, streamers in the wind. That evening the new arrivals were invited to a grand ball, and there was also a fireworks display.449

Ada thought Honolulu a beautiful “rural” little town full of white cottages “set in a sea of evergreens and flowers,” its atmosphere “fragrant and blooming.” She noted that it was well supplied with churches and schools thanks to the influence of the American missionaries.450 In 1864, Honolulu was the center of government and commerce for the islands, and a busy port where products like sugar and molasses from other islands were sent to be shipped out. Also many foodstuffs and all manufactured goods had to be shipped into Honolulu from the United States and Europe. At certain times of the year, whaling ships dominated the harbor, their crews enlivening the town, though not always for the good. Whaling had been the chief industry of the islands but was beginning to die down by the 1860s.
Ada was impressed with the natives, the Kanakas. She thought they were handsome, quiet, hard-working, and even well-educated, “thanks to Christianity and the school-book.” She especially liked the way the native women dressed. The missionaries considered the half-nude native costume lewd, and had forced the women to wear long shapeless garments from their neck to their toes. But Ada thought the dresses gave the women complete freedom of movement, so they escaped “the enlightenment of pressing their ribs into iron and whalebone corsets.”

Ada was less complimentary about the way the non-native women dressed. She had visited other warm weather countries where women wore white and pastel dresses in delicate fabrics. She was appalled that the American and European women in Honolulu wore styles that were years behind the times and made of dark coarse fabrics. There would be no interesting fashion reports from Honolulu.

A year or so later, Mark Twain gave an apt description of Honolulu’s population of 15,000 when he wrote travel letters from Hawaii for the *Sacramento Union*. It seemed that everyone that Twain met was either a missionary or a whaler. He estimated the captains and ministers to make up one-half of the population, another fourth to be “common Kanakas and mercantile foreigners with families,” and another fourth to be officers of the Hawaiian government. He added, “And there are just about cats enough for three apiece all around.”

Ada did not stay long in Honolulu, however. Stoddard had not yet arrived, and Ada wanted to see more of the surrounding islands before returning to Honolulu for a longer visit. The August weather was hot and dry – the best time of the year for visiting the most important tourist attraction, the ever-active volcano of Kilauea on the big island of Hawaii.

Ada left Aubrey with Stoddard’s friends and joined Walter Leman, two other men, and another woman sailing August 16, 1864 for Hilo on the big island of Hawai‘i. There they would make their journey by horseback to the volcano. They sailed on an inter-island boat that had been King Kamehameha V’s yacht, “a lumbering old tub,” but dependable. The ship’s “fourteen different kinds of up and down motions in one second” made Ada seasick for the first time in her life. She gained little solace from either getting some air on decks awash with high waves, filled with natives traveling with dogs, blankets, their food, and other baggage; or going below to share an airless cabin crowded with other “undesirable people.” After a few days the ship reached Hilo, and its passengers prepared to visit the volcano.

From Hilo the distance was 29 miles to the volcano, and the horseback ride usually took from 6 to 9 hours. The party left Hilo in afternoon with three native attendants. Two of the attendants rode with Ada and the other woman. As Ada described it first they were burned by the sun, and then drenched by rain and winds that lasted for hours. Ada also had trouble with her obstinate horse. She was certain her guide supplied her with a “hard horse,” thinking she was such a poor rider that she would not know the difference. For hours she struggled as her horse stumbled and slid along a trail of mud and loose stones. At one point she slipped off her horse into the mud, and then walked for a mile rather than get back on it. Ada was delighted when they stopped for dinner and an overnight stay at a native grass hut built for tourists. Looking up at the southwestern sky they could already see the fiery cloud hanging above the volcano.

When Ada awakened the next morning she discovered problems with her clothing. She had assembled her own version of the bloomer costume to wear to the volcano that made it possible for her to ride astride rather than sidesaddle. Very few women tourists rode horseback to the volcano – many were carried in litters or on the backs of native guides. Some of them wore “bloomer drawers” provided by an American minister’s wife in Hilo. Ada’s costume was a black poplin dress trimmed with blue over fawn colored Turkish trousers with only an inch or two of trousers visible below the hem. But the rain had made her dress shrink so that the hem was now only several inches below her waist. Showing so much leg even covered by trousers would have been frowned on in polite circles, but Ada was annoyed because the dress was ruined, not because her trousers showed.

After another eight miles of muddy trail tangled with roots of huge trees they began to cross an expanse of “great waves of petrified lava” ascending to the crater of Kilauea. And then they began descending the sheer cliffs down the sides of the crater. Here were “great, yawning cracks in the lava beds … from which came up sulphurous vapors, as climbing, creeping, and hanging on we went, and at last came to the lake of fire.” Here, as the old Hawaiian religion believed, was the dwelling place of the goddess Pele.
The visitors marveled at the “fiery abyss ... with long seams of fire running through the whole, shuddering, seething, and muttering ... and here and there great pools of liquid flame bubbling and hissing, and now and then whirling up in tall jets and columns like fiery waterspouts.” Ada was impressed, but declared peaceful Lake Tahoe to be her ideal type of sightseeing.458

Their party watched the scene for five hours while sitting on blankets and enjoying refreshments. During that time Leman described the other female tourist singing songs “of home and fatherland” including “Home Sweet Home.”459 For once Ada didn’t feel like performing. She was weary, her bones ached, and she thought she was “a fit candidate for Bedlam.” They stayed overnight at a hut nearby called Volcano House, where they slept rolled up in blankets on wooden bunks. The rest of the party stayed several days, but Ada and the other woman returned to Hilo with a guide. She thought going back was even more difficult, though she now rode a mule, more sure-footed but just as stubborn as “the dromedary” had been. A bright spot was her meeting a small native boy with a big bag of pineapples in a beautiful grove of trees along the way. For twelve cents Ada enjoyed a rare treat of fresh pineapple, and exhausted, she promptly fell asleep on the grass.460

Ada stayed a few days in Hilo waiting for an inter-island boat going back to Honolulu. She attended church, and was appalled by the “hellfire and brimstone” style of the minister. His American congregation was a “dejected, morose, and sullen looking group,” and Ada thought even the natives in Hilo looked like they were afraid to smile. She thought Hilo a “small, ill-favored village” with few pretty trees, flowers, or houses like Honolulu. “The iron hand of missionary rule” was heavier there than in Honolulu where it was tempered by “the California visitors, and the whaler’s men.” She thought Hilo represented the worst of the missionary influence.461

But it was not easy to get away from Hilo. Ada’s boat lay becalmed and rolling at anchor for three days in sight of the town. This time Ada had to choose between sharing her cabin with “colossal, though sociable roaches,” or stumbling over sugar and molasses barrels and whaleboats as she tried to find space for herself on deck. They finally set sail and when they reached their first port, there was worse to come. Trying to land they were almost ashore when the wind stopped, and the incoming tide almost dashed the boat upon the rocks. The crew took to the whaleboats, fastened ropes to the boat, and then pulled it safely onto the shore.462

While her boat was loaded with sugar to be taken to Honolulu, Ada was happy to accept the hospitality of an American family at their sugar plantation. The family members expected to offer hospitality under the circumstances, and were glad to enjoy the diversion of her visit. Susan Campbell describes how women on plantations were used to welcoming, with or without advance notice, varying numbers of visitors who might stay any length of time. Hospitality was not only a social obligation, but offered “entertainment and excitement” when social life was limited to “a small static group for periods of time between ships.”463

Ada was an interested observer of the work of the sugar plantation: cutting the cane, transporting it over muddy paths by wild oxen driven by “diabolical howling and screaming from the native drivers,” grinding it with a water wheel, boiling it in “great foaming fizzy boilers,” putting it in vats, running it through the cooling troughs, drying it in round, “swiftly gyrating boxes,” and heaping it in great wooden receivers where, the sugar and molasses, looked “whitey-brown and sweet and clean as topaz gems.” She visited with her hosts, relaxing and day-dreaming while wind rippled the leaves of banana trees. 464Soon enough, her boat left for Honolulu and Ada reluctantly returned to a few more days of seasickness. But ahead lay the most enjoyable time of the four months she would spend in the Hawaiian Islands.

Ada soon joined Aubrey and the newly arrived Stoddard465 and began to live a pleasant daily life with hospitable friends.466 Ada rose early and either took a “salt water bath,” or a “swim in a rocky and cataract-fed basin.” Then she and Stoddard lay in hammocks, reading, talking and eating tropical fruits, strawberries, and grapes. Stoddard remembered that Ada “would swing in her hammock and roll her cigarettes, while the violet eyes grew heavy with the languor of that dreamy life.”467

After all that languor and a heavy afternoon meal, Ada would join Aubrey for a nap. Then there was time for either horseback riding, or a walk down to city. After teatime, the lighter evening meal, the family enjoyed visitors for “whist, or pleasant conversation” and then everyone retired at ten o’clock. Ada thought that rather early, but there was no nightlife or entertainment in Honolulu like San Francisco or New York. There was amateur theater, and an occasional variety artist or circus came to town. The few dramatic
readings and lectures Walter Leman, Ada’s actor friend, gave in Honolulu and Hilo drew very appreciative audiences. At any rate Ada was tired enough from daytime activities to sleep better than she had in years.468

A favorite walk for Ada and Aubrey was down the steep Nu’uanu Valley Road two miles to the docks where she and Aubrey really enjoyed witnessing all the activity. By early Fall the whalers began to come in, and by November the harbor was “bristling with the masts of tired whalers in repose, and all the wharves [were] … odorous with whale oil casks.” Ada noted that the whale was a staple topic of conversation as though it “were a domestic animal kept in the back garden” like other family pets.469 The whalers usually put into Hawaii twice a year to break up their three or four years long voyages pursuing whales. Gradually whales grew scarcer and whaling areas became farther and farther apart. The industry began to decline as a source of income for Hawaii in the late 1850s. The Civil War cut the number of whalers in half.470

Ada had never meant to stay in Hawai’i as long as she did. By September she thought she might be booking return passage soon, and was inspecting San Francisco bound barks like the A.A. Eldridge, which was fast and had the best passenger accommodations on the route. But it would be November before she sailed on that ship. Before she could leave that September, a new friend expanded her social life to more interesting possibilities. And their first encounter was when Ada and Aubrey were walking home from visiting the docks.

Charles Warren Stoddard, wrote about this meeting many years later in his Exits and Entrances, remembering that Dr. Robert Crichton Wyllie, the Foreign Minister of Hawaii, told him he was enchanted by Ada from the moment he saw her without even knowing who she was. Wyllie made a daily walk home from his waterfront office up the Nu’uanu Valley Road to his plantation home, Rosebank. One day he was caught in a sudden shower, and as he was opening his umbrella, he noticed a beautiful blonde woman and her waif-like child taking shelter under a nearby tree. He offered to shelter them under his umbrella, and accompany them on their way. The woman politely refused, and as Wyllie walked home he wondered who they could be. He often visited with his neighbors, and had met Stoddard when he arrived August 19, 1864. In a recent conversation Stoddard had told Wyllie he and his hosts were entertaining a most unusual visitor.471

On arriving home Wyllie invited Stoddard to tea. Soon they were seated at a round table on the spacious porch at Rosebank where Wyllie himself brewed a delicious English tea, and servants brought platters of food. Stoddard described the scene as they chatted overlooking flowery groves that led down to Waikiki Beach, and listening to the booming of the surf. Suddenly Wyllie blurted out: “I have seen a singularly beautiful woman, and I wish to know something of her history.” He related the incident ending with Ada’s refusal leaving him with a memory of “violet eyes and corn-colored hair.” He wanted to know who she was. Was this woman the guest Stoddard told him about? Wyllie could not understand why they had not been introduced. Being close to Dowager Queen Emma and the royal family, he was usually among the first to meet all important visitors.472

But as Stoddard explained to Wyllie, Ada was not welcome among the prudish, American missionary-influenced, citizens of Honolulu. Indeed he told Wyllie that on Stoddard’s arrival, some Americans told him Ada was visiting the volcano, and would be quite at home in the “fiery pit” consorting with the volcano goddess, Pele.473

Wyllie listened fascinated to Stoddard’s story of how Ada had progressed from being a Southern belle in antebellum Charleston to becoming a Northern bluestocking known as the “Queen of Bohemia” in the 1860s. Stoddard explained that Ada Clare was well-known as a writer for the Saturday Press, and other New York, and San Francisco newspapers. However, she was also well-known for not denying she was the unmarried mother of Aubrey, the boy Willie had seen. Stoddard told it all, introduced Ada to Wyllie, and she became a frequent guest at Rosebank.

Ada made a powerful friend in Robert Crichton Wyllie. Born in 1798, in Ayrshire, Scotland, and educated to be a doctor at the University of Glasgow, Wyllie was apprenticed to a ship’s surgeon and traveled all over the world. He was at various times a squatter in the gold fields of Australia, skipper of a yacht, and a soldier of fortune, but ended up in the shipping business, which he pursued successfully in South America and Mexico. Later with an office in London he became a West-End club man at home in Mayfair but handling additional investments in the U.S.A. He came to Hawaii on business in 1844, but helped out as British Consul. His friendship with King Kamehameha III led to his appointment as
Hawaiian Foreign Minister from 1845 until his death in 1865. He strongly influenced the Hawaiian royal family and Hawaiian politics. During the years when foreign powers looked greedily at Hawaii, Wyllie struggled continually for treaties in which England and America guaranteed the independence and neutrality of Hawaii. That was probably his most valuable achievement among many.

However well Wyllie guarded the political independence of Hawaii from European powers, he nevertheless influenced the royal family to adapt European manners and dress. He particularly encouraged them to be Anglophiles, though the American influence had been strongest on them as children. In the 1830s King Kamehameha III had requested that American missionaries give his children an American-style education, and set up a royal boarding school. These missionaries, mainly Congregationalist and Presbyterian, first received royal permission to come to Hawaii around 1820 to promote literacy and spread their religion. An earlier ruler had abolished worship of the native Hawaiian gods, leaving room for a different religion, and Kamehameha III also realized that education in western ways was necessary for his children. Future Hawaiian rulers would deal with increasing pressure from foreign powers, some of which were already trying to take over Hawaii. To combat this, the king had sought American and English advice in setting up his government. After Wyllie came, his influence was strong though the other three powers in the king’s cabinet were American. Under his influence, the royal family was eventually converted to the Anglican Church, and put in direct touch with Queen Victoria herself. Wyllie was especially close to Dowager Queen Emma who had been raised to be a most proper Victorian lady in the English style.

When Ada and Wyllie met in 1864, he was 66 years old, slender and bony with reddish hair and large mustache, a pleasant face, and a Lowlands Scots accent. Though respected for working on behalf of the Hawaiian Kingdom, he was often lampooned in the newspapers – he was said to, “wield a pen of 40 Scribbler Power invaluable to a country whose official correspondence was so extensive.” Stoddard remembered that there were “[p]apers, documents, all kinds of literary rubbish heaped on a large circle of chairs” in the Great Hall at Rosebank. Wyllie bombarded diplomats in countries all over the world with endless volleys of letters urging them to work for the best interests of Hawaii.

Though Stoddard was certain Wyllie’s interest in Ada was romantic, there is no evidence that anything but friendship existed between them. It is possible that Wyllie may have hoped for a May-December romance with Ada, who was 36 years younger. On her side she seemed grateful for his friendship and hospitality. Earlier Wyllie had a close relationship with Lady Jane Franklin when she visited Hawaii in 1861. She was the widow of the famed English explorer, Sir John Franklin, lost on an arctic expedition. Lady Jane, a traveler and writer of some reputation herself, spent years supporting searches for the lost arctic expedition until its fatal end was finally confirmed in 1859. During a pleasure tour of the Americas in 1861, Lady Jane Franklin visited Hawaii for several months to get away from bad weather in San Francisco. She and her niece stayed with Wyllie at Rosebank, and became very friendly with the royal family. Lady Jane only returned to Hawaii once more for a short visit, but she and Wyllie corresponded for years. Later, Dowager Queen Emma visited her in England, and was presented at court with special attention from Queen Victoria.

Romance or no, Ada’s friendship with Wyllie brought her to the attention of everyone she wanted to meet in Hawaii, and especially the royal family. As Stoddard noted, even the prudish people who had previously disapproved of her suddenly wanted to meet her, and even asked for her autographed picture! However Stoddard may have exaggerated the number of those puritanical enough to shun Ada socially. Given the novelty any visitor provided to the limited social life of the islands, and given Ada’s beauty and charm, one can imagine almost everyone wanting to meet her if only out of curiosity. According to Gavin Daws, writing about the power of the American missionaries to influence behavior, there was "a drift away from Puritanism” as early as 1854. By 1870, “Englishmen, Europeans, non-Puritan Americans, and members of the Hawaiian ruling class” were deciding what was acceptable behavior, and rejecting "Puritan standards." The Queen of Bohemia was soon sitting with Wyllie next to Dowager Queen Emma’s royal pew during Sunday service at the Anglican Church. For Ada this was a welcome alternative to American church services where everyone, hoping for a speedy Union victory, praised God for General Sherman’s conquest of Atlanta, and his subsequent victorious march to the sea.
No more was Ada available to spend hours with Stoddard chatting about books, people, and what life was all about. Even years later Stoddard’s writing shows his envy of Wyllie as someone who took Ada’s exclusive attention away from him by sponsoring her more active social life. According to Stoddard when Ada first joined him in Honolulu, she relied on him completely for suggestions on everything including what to wear and what to do next. Stoddard liked being needed, but the truth was that he needed Ada even more than she needed him. Their intimacy as friends had a hidden dimension: they were both “outsiders” because their sexuality went against what was acceptable in their social and religious milieu. Ada flaunted her sexuality and was open about being the unmarried mother of her child. Furthermore as her writing and her conduct show, she was proud of her body and her physical beauty.

The extent to which Stoddard idealized Ada, and how he felt about his own sexuality is revealed in an entry from a notebook he kept, a “thought book” containing ideas for future writing among other things. In this entry Stoddard “thinks of sketching a ‘Romance of how my soul got into (Ada) Clare’s body and was at rest’, with the idea that the ‘physique’ would thus be ‘made whole’.”478

In Hawaii, Stoddard’s homosexual longings had begun to surface. He was stimulated by sights of handsome native boys swimming and sunning themselves, and he realized he might have to hide his feelings forever to avoid condemnation.479 He may have confided in Ada about this, and her disdain for society and what was “proper” must have given Stoddard comfort. Together they had enjoyed making fun of what they saw as religious hypocrisy of the missionaries and the social pretensions of others of the Hawaiian social scene. Stoddard may have been surprised when Ada was delighted to become part of that social scene.

He wrote of Wyllie’s relationship with Lady Jane Franklin, not as the close friendship it undoubtedly was but as a romantic love affair. He ridiculed it as a love affair without much potential, because Wyllie was a “bachelor laird in his blushing sixties,” and Lady Jane was a “withered siren.” Stoddard could believe sixtyish Wyllie’s interest in Ada was romantic probably because Ada was an unwithered siren, even though he must have realized Ada saw Wyllie as a social mentor, not as a romantic partner. Regardless of the accuracy of his view of Ada and Wyllie’s relationship, he felt she valued time spent gadding about with Wyllie more than her time alone with himself. Stoddard would not have Ada’s exclusive attention again until they sailed home with Aubrey in late November, 1864.

Ada publicized Wyllie in “A Panegyric – The Minister of Foreign Affairs,” one part of her last column for the Bulletin from Hawaii.480 She praised his record as Foreign Minister lavishly, and told about her experiences as his friend. The only invitation of his she had turned down was a trip to his model plantation Princeville on the garden island of Kauai, where Wyllie played the feudal English lord. So he had gone with the king, his ministers, and the rest of the court, and Ada described the lavish spectacle she missed.

She wrote of time spent at Wyllie’s home Rosebank not too far from where she was staying. In truth Wyllie generated most of whatever interesting social life there was on O‘ahu. The high point of the rest of the social season was the November 8, 1864 Festival, Fair, and Tea Party for aid of the U.S. Christian Commission where the ladies put on “tableaux.” Ada compared that to Wyllie’s dinner parties, where the foreign minister received like a “gentleman of the old school.” 481

There he would even pass around a silver loving cup for libations, a gift from Lady Jane Franklin. The cup was richly embossed with gold on a base of wood from H.M.S. Fox, the ship outfitted by Lady Jane that learned the final fate of her husband’s lost arctic expedition. With this cup every guest drank to the health of the absent Lady Jane, and all the other guests—Wyllie’s infatuation with the “Lady Clare” did not keep him from the rituals of remembering Lady Jane. And whether, like Lady Jane, Ada was invited to move into the special guest suite in the tower or not, she was definitely taken to see it.

Ada thought the suite was furnished in the utmost of luxury and good taste, “like a little bit of Paris dropped into these parts.” She noted that its guests had included the late King and Dowager Queen Emma, as well as Lady Jane. She praised Wyllie’s continuing kindness to Queen Emma, pointing out that the late King had told Queen Emma on his deathbed that she could depend on Wyllie to be a loyal and concerned friend.482

At the time that Ada first met Wyllie, he was surrounded by controversy. King Kamehameha V, the late King’s successor, had convened a constitutional convention in summer, 1864, and in altering the constitution had taken away the rights of ordinary citizens like the Kanaka natives to vote. As one of the
most influential ministers, Wylie was blamed for putting so much power back into the king’s hands, and thus into his own. Ada denied that Wylie influenced the king to abolish universal suffrage and “trampled on the old constitution” as the Honolulu newspaper, the Pacific Commercial Advertiser put it.\textsuperscript{483} She believed that the natives could have been worse off. In the original constitution of 1852, the king had reserved to himself the right to resume “despotism, and the absolute right of life or death over his people at any time.” The present king had forewarned that right in the new constitution, so the natives had lost the vote, but gained security in other ways.\textsuperscript{484}

Wylie’s close connections to the Royal family and his sponsorship of Ada resulted in an invitation for her to attend court at the royal palace. The palace building was a modest one-story house of coral blocks with a lookout on top, but the interior was lavishly decorated in European style. With Wylie’s insistence on European court etiquette, royal receptions had become more and more elaborate. He himself wore an elaborate braided uniform with a cocked hat and a sword while at court. An English butler and French chef headed the palace staff, and refreshments never included native food. Dancing and music were in the European style too, so visitors had to look elsewhere for a demonstration of the \textit{hula}, or a taste of the native’s most basic food, \textit{poi}.\textsuperscript{485} It was not at the palace but at a picnic on Waikiki Beach that Ada first sampled \textit{poi}, and pig roasted in the Hawaiian style, and served with taro. Though she loved many things about Hawaii, the native foods were not among them.\textsuperscript{486}

Within all these European trappings there was something genuinely Hawaiian that the royal family preserved. Ada was very impressed by the superb Hawaiian feather robes that the rulers wore “in lieu of ermine.”\textsuperscript{487} These were inherited from the chiefs of the original tribes unified in one isle—and one kingdom—by Kamehameha the Great. The most striking cloak was of tiny gold feathers, but others were woven of red, yellow, and black feathers intermixed and woven into diamond patterns. Hundreds of thousands of under-wing feathers, from birds called honeysuckers, were attached to a ground of netting so that the surface of the robe had the texture and appearance of velvet.\textsuperscript{488}

There were so many things about Hawaii Ada loved, she regretted having to leave for San Francisco the end of November to fulfill her theatrical commitment to Maguire. Her visit that was planned to last several weeks had stretched to four very pleasant months. She and Aubrey were healthier and happier than they had been in years. She thought Hawaii perfect in terms of climate, government, “perpetual supply of green grass, beautiful fruits and flowers,” well-behaved natives, and lack of disease. She was prophetic in writing that if Hawaii had a good “family hotel” or two, there would not be enough boats to bring all the people who would want to visit. To Ada Hawaii was “the paradise of the tropics,” but she knew even then she would probably never return. She was thinking of returning to New York City now that the war might be nearing its end, and Hawaii was too far to visit for a pleasure trip.\textsuperscript{489}

Perhaps for Ada life in Hawaii was a comfortable reliving of her earlier South Carolina days. She felt sheltered and cared for. Never mind that there were a few strait-laced Americans in Honolulu who had disapproved of her. By now, her skin was even thicker than it had been in the days of standing up to some of her “girl slaughtering” relatives. Plantation life in a mild climate with plenty of servants, and the benevolent attention of Wylie who did everything in the English gentleman’s style harked back to the best of her plantation days at grandfather Hugh Wilson’s Ravenswood, and the Charleston society world that emulated Victorian England. She even had a companion and literary friend in Stoddard just as she had had in her cousin Paul Hayne and friend Julian Mitchell in the past.

Stoddard, at least, was not left behind when Ada left Hawai’i. Wylie saw Ada, Aubrey, and Stoddard off on the A.A. Eldridge November 26, 1864. His parting gift to Ada was “half a cord of documents relating to his foreign ministry in Hawaii,” and forty pounds of flour. Wylie’s hobby was cooking, and he wanted Ada to have only the best baked goods in the future.\textsuperscript{490} He himself continued his active life for only one more year, and then dropped dead. Was his heart strained by overwork, or was it broken when he could not entice either of the two most interesting women he ever met to stay permanently in his island home?
CHAPTER 10: SLOWLY HEADING HOME

Once more Stoddard had the majority of Ada’s attention – he had never minded sharing it with Aubrey. Indeed Stoddard probably had more patience with Aubrey than Ada did, and enjoyed amusing him within the confined area of the ship for two weeks. They had the space usually reserved as the women’s lounge all to themselves for recreation. There was only one other woman aboard the ship, who kept to herself.

In two weeks they were back in San Francisco, and there was barely time for Ada to rehearse her role as Camille to be performed on Thursday evening, December 29. She had already spent time studying her lines, but perhaps when she realized she would be appearing at huge Maguire’s Opera House, she worked even harder. It was just the sort of theater that swallowed up her voice: that quiet, aristocratic voice never easily heard in large theaters. The Opera House held 1600 people, and Maguire probably thought Ada, well-known for her writing at least, could draw a large audience. Unfortunately, it was not drama, but acrobats and minstrels that usually drew the largest crowds to the Opera House.

Maguire did not skimp on advance publicity, and one of Ada’s friends at the Era wrote up her coming “debut” as a major event. This article speculated about Ada’s chances for a theatrical success. On the plus side, the writer thought Ada had youth, beauty, grace, delicacy, and a “musical and penetrative voice.” Best of all, her writing showed she had the intelligence necessary for understanding the complex role. Her review of Mrs. Winn’s performance as “Camille” in March, 1864 showed her familiarity with the role and theater performance in general. People could expect a lot from Ada.

However, the article also noted that that expectation might prove to be a drawback. “The reputation already achieved, while securing intelligent consideration, will be felt as a kind of weight when entering upon a new pursuit.” Nowhere was it revealed that though this was her West Coast debut, acting was not a “new pursuit” for Ada. Perhaps Ada wanted to be judged as a novice. The critics might not expect so much from an absolute beginner, though she had certainly taken her lumps after her acting debut in New York in August of 1855. Perhaps Ada thought because her performances had been sporadic, and she had not appeared since 1862, she should be considered a novice. If that is true, than Ada’s comments in the Era, March 20, 1864 about Mrs. Winn’s performance as Camille were prophetic – it was no part for a novice, and “it was a terrible part to see ill-played.”

The play Camille had been dramatized from the novel La Dame aux Camelias by Alexandre Dumas, and first played in Paris in 1852. The novel also provided the story for the Verdi’s opera La Traviata. The American actress Matilda Heron was a huge success in Camille in America in 1855, and played the title role for many years. She created her own English-language version of the play after seeing it in Paris. The play debuted in America in 1852, and throughout its long life it was usually surrounded by some controversy because its heroine Camille was a courtesan who sacrifices her hope for a new life with her lover Armand for the good of Armand and his family. Some changed the play for America’s more prudish tastes by making Camille a coquette rather than a courtesan. Laura Keene played Camille in 1856 and later with great success—she cleverly kept the play intact, but added a scene at the end with Camille awakening to realize what had happened was only a dream.

When Ada played Camille, there was an emotional component present for her that hindered her artistic control of her performance. Feeling emotion is not acting; portraying emotion so that the audience feels it and responds is acting. Instead of acting the role of Camille, Ada was Camille. It is possible that Ada could not separate her feelings about the character of Camille, a “fallen woman” in the world’s eyes because her sexual life as a prostitute was outside the boundaries of propriety, from Ada’s feelings about her own self as a “fallen woman” whose sexual liaison outside of marriage was embodied in her son Aubrey.

In that puritanical era, many argued that a play with a heroine whose sexual life was not considered respectable was not worth putting on. In defending Camille, Ada defended herself. As she reviewed the play over the years she strongly defended the worth of the heroine, saying that just because she was a
prostitute she was not automatically a person of bad character, and thus a play about her life was worthy of being performed. Ada's impassioned defense of the heroine's "divine triumph" as a human being can be seen as a defense of herself as someone who could be worthwhile even though her sexuality was not accepted by polite society.

During Ada's debut on Thursday evening, December 29, 1864, only 800 people were in the theater. The popular Fireman's Ball and a storm that lasted several days contributed to the half-empty house. And the audience present was not kind. When Ada made her entrance only a few gave the customary ovation for a leading lady making her debut. One reviewer noted Ada's disadvantage in having to "[speak] her first word in doubt whether or not her audience was favorably disposed."

No wonder she was nervous! Before the performance, Stoddard had tried to calm and encourage her, but once the performance began her terrible stage fright overwhelmed her. The audience went from being cool to being downright hostile as the play progressed. Her supporting cast was very competent, and Frank Mayo, who played Camille's lover Armand Duval, was especially well-known; but except for Mayo, the cast did little to support her. Stoddard and one of the reviewers suggested that this was because she had been a "severe" critic of their performances in the past and now it was their chance to get even. The cast seemed to enjoy Ada's discomfort when the gallery began to make catcalls.

Everyone agreed that Ada did well in the light comedy scenes where the heroine played the frivolous coquette. And yet those were the very scenes that Ada felt did not show the true depth of Camille's character. Ada failed in those impassioned scenes where Camille bared her soul. She did not do well in dramatic scenes such as when Armand and Camille first declared their love with Camille's promise to give up her other lovers, when the heroine promised Armand's father she would renounce Armand because she was no good for him, and the final scene when Armand and Camille, dying of tuberculosis, were reunited. Even Stoddard, Ada's stalwart champion, described Ada's performance on the deathbed as "hysterical wailing with pulmonary punctuation." There were those who thought Ada actually lacked the physical stamina for the part — there may have been more holding her back than her small voice, and inability to project really strong emotions.

Just at the end of the scene in the casino in Act 4, when Armand, angry with Camille because he thought she had left him for another, threw his money at her feet calling her a common prostitute, the gallery shouted their dissatisfaction with Ada's acting. Frank Mayo came out after the curtain and stood before the audience and with "one glance of his magnificent eyes," he completely silenced the angry mob.

As if Ada's voice wasn't difficult enough to hear, she had chosen to intone her lines in the most dramatic scenes, thereby making it almost impossible to understand her words. As the Era's critic explained, intoning was an acting technique of the French theater adopted by Matilda Heron, the most famous American Camille. Ada had seen the play in Paris, and had seen Heron as Camille many times. She idolized Heron and must have tried to imitate her. Intoning was vocalizing somewhere between chanting and singing, and Ada's use of it frustrated the none-too-attentive audience even more. Perhaps she used intoning to cover-up her southern accent, and the audience's ridicule of her as a bad actress was easier for her to take than their throwing things at her because she was a southerner. Now that a Union victory was sure, and the war was almost over, San Franciscans who supported the Union were more and more open about expressing their hostility to southerners in public and Ada had never denied being sympathetic to the Confederacy.

But even though some of the audience had booed her, it was not true as Stoddard said that the fraternal press "did not spare her in their reviews." The Era had a round-up of all the important reviews as well as their own, and all the reviewers praised her intellectual conception of the role, but thought she just didn't have enough acting experience to play such a difficult part. Even the worst reviews had something positive to say about Ada having dramatic talent that could be developed best in small comic roles where her light voice and lack of physical stamina might not be such a drawback. All expressed admiration for her writing abilities.

Ada could console herself in her firsthand knowledge, after almost a year of observing San Franciscans at the theater, that they were not the best judges of theater in the world. She had evidence that those whose opinion she valued still admired her intellectual ability and writing talent. But at that time of her life it
would have been wonderful to make a lot of money on the stage. She could have scrapped her plans to leave. But knowing that she would make no theater success in San Francisco, and the humiliation of her defeat may have made it easier to leave on the next ship headed for New York January 11, 1865.

Kind-hearted Stoddard was ashamed to see the San Francisco audience treat Ada so badly. He was not happy to see her leave, and they corresponded for several years afterward. It would be awhile before his close companionship with her would be matched by his alliance with fellow writers Bret Harte and Ina Coolbrith. Before she left, Ada gave him photographs of herself and Aubrey that he cherished until the end of his life.

It was unclear what else she left by way of influence on the western writers. She would pull some of Stoddard's verses into the restored *Saturday Press* the next year, praising him as a rising young western poet and her influence undoubtedly made him eager to become a founding member of San Francisco’s first Bohemia soon after. She also drew attention to Harte's writing, later revealing him as the author of *Condensed Novels*, his delightful literary parodies. But it is literary critic Franklin Walker’s opinion that Ada and her kind were not a good influence on the local writers of the West. First, visiting writers from the East provided high-flown literary models that turned western writers away from the freshness and immediacy of straightforward writing about western experiences. The visitors also drew more attention to the eastern literary establishment as a market for western writers. As a result of the successful reception of their work in the East, Twain, Harte, Stoddard and others ultimately deserted the West for New York, and then Europe. Twain and Harte never returned.499

The new year of 1865 found Ada and Aubrey packing and saying their farewells and by January 11 they boarded the *America* headed for New York by way of Nicaragua, a route 600 miles shorter than the one through Panama. Ada had a marvelous time on this trip. The ship was clean, the cabins comfortable, and food and service the best. Her only complaint was that the voyage was too fast to allow enough time for the “three legitimate pleasures of water traveling – reflection, flirting, and seasickness!” She enjoyed the company of several actresses returning from successful seasons in San Francisco. The most well-known was Emily Jordan, happy to be friendly with Ada who had given her excellent reviews.501

The voyage started out well with the Pacific unusually tranquil, “the sun setting on it like huge plates of brass.” But on the eighth evening they had a scare. Passing another ship they sent up a flare in greeting. Suddenly the other ship fired a shell and started chasing them. Their ship doused all lights and fled at full speed. After a time they eluded the other ship but everyone aboard was frightened. Had it been a Confederate privateer even though the war was almost over? And why would it fire on a passenger ship? On January 24, they landed at San Juan de Sur, Nicaragua and prepared to travel 12 miles to Lake Nicaragua to board lake steamers crossing to the San Juan River. There they would board riverboats for Greytown where they would meet their ship for New York. Ada chose an amiable cream-colored horse to ride sidesaddle to the lake. She enjoyed this ride, cantering along a fine macadam road bordered with trees and flowers, much better than her ride to the volcano in Hawaii. She rode ahead of the other six hundred passengers, stopped at every refreshment house along the way, and managed to eat up all the chocolate.

At the lake they boarded steamers for a rough crossing to the mouth of the San Juan River. Ada was amazed at the jungle around them. She saw parrots and other bright birds amid the thick trees and vines “like a green wall,” and monkeys that “looked down on us with ludicrous gravity.” Whenever they reached shoals or rapids “the gentlemen were invited to get out and walk to lighten the boat,” but soon they reached low water and they were stranded on a sand bar. They camped out waiting for rescue, and that night while they slept, their agent, about to be let go by the company, took their one canoe and deserted them. The passengers laughed about it all, cursed the agent, and broke into his private stores to find ginger nuts and a barrel of the best California wine. They passed this around in coffee pots and teakettles and were having loads of fun when they were rescued 24 hours later and taken to Greytown.

After taking the passengers out to board the *Golden Rule*, the barges could not bring the baggage because the sea became so rough. Some passengers were so impatient they begged the captain to sail without the baggage. Ada was furious. She said the protesters were men who had no luggage but the carpetbags they carried. She made a big fuss about needing her three trunks full of winter clothes, to prevent her having to face winter in New York in “fine linen and French cambric” if she didn’t first “freeze to death off New Jersey” before disembarking. After three days, the baggage was finally loaded and the ship
steamed toward New York. They learned from passing steamers that their delay in Nicaragua saved them from encountering severe storms off Cape Hatteras. Ada attributed their good luck to Captain Babcock, who had never been in any accident at sea throughout his long career.

Ada had so much fun eating and partying on this trip that she even thought of “stowing away” for another voyage instead of going ashore. As they neared New York it was a shock to come so quickly from hot weather into cold “like rolling out of a sleigh into a snow bank.” For a year she had forgotten what a New York winter was like. She was thrilled to see the city again, but there was much ahead to think about. She would be forced to live in a hotel room with Aubrey again, or in boardinghouses with her friends the Winters unless the end of the war brought an improvement in her finances through increased interest from her investments. After her fiasco in San Francisco she temporarily put aside thoughts of restoring her finances with a stage success. The same ship that brought her home also carried newspapers full of her adverse reviews from San Francisco, and she didn’t want to be “box office poison” on both coasts. She could always write, but journalism didn’t pay much. Perhaps she would try a novel? Instead of reminiscing about old love affairs in newspaper columns, why not make romance pay by making it the central event of a novel? She would discuss her writing and be welcomed by her old friends at Pfaff’s once more, though the band of Bohemians would not be the same without Getty Gay, Fitz-James O’Brien, Ned Wilkins, and others sadly missed. Putting fears for her future aside, she tried to be optimistic as they got ready to disembark. New York was “a glorious city,” the war was ending, she had her health, her child, her talent, and her friends. Best of all, at last they were safely home after their long journey.
Ada returned to New York February 12, 1864. Everyone hoped the Civil War would come to an end soon and there was disappointment when the recent conference between President Lincoln and the Rebel Commissioners did not lead to peace. The South only wanted peace as an independent entity: it would not return to being part of the United States subject to all its laws. However with Northern forces pressing the South hard from many directions, the South’s unconditional surrender was not far off.

Despite the war and the bad winter weather, many New Yorkers were busy buying valentines and amusing themselves. Italian opera held sway at the Academy of Music where La Traviata and Il Trovatore were favorites. Trying to please every kind of audience, Barnum’s offered a cut-rate version of Trovatore called Azucena – The Gypsy’s Vengeance. They also presented a Punch and Judy Show for children in the mornings. Its “museum” offered the “Living Skeleton,” a dancing giraffe, and three fat ladies whose combined weight amounted to two tons. Edwin Booth’s famous “Hundred Nights of Hamlet” was in its twelfth week at his Winter Garden theater and performances were sold-out; audiences never tired of Booth as “the melancholy Dane.”

The Academy of Music was the center for other events besides opera and concerts. There was a Billiard Championship Match. Organizations like the Liederkranz Society and the Arion Society gave huge masquerade balls there. They attracted such crowds of New Yorkers dressed in carnival finery, the merrymakers found it impossible to dance or promenade. One observer thought the elaborate costumes would have done justice to Paris.

The war was not completely forgotten. Soldiers at the New York Depot were invited to be guests for a special performance at Henry Wood’s theater and showed their appreciation by putting on a special drill onstage after the play. The draft was still in force with New York calling for 100,000 volunteers, but it was possible to buy a substitute for $500.

On March 6, 1865, New Yorkers used the occasion of Lincoln’s second inauguration as a time to celebrate. Cheering crowds lined the street, and some climbed to the roof-tops to watch the three hour long parade of Lincoln’s political supporters. That night red, white, and blue fireworks lit up the sky. It was a premature celebration of the end of the war.

New Yorkers hoped that better times were coming. The newspapers noted that the cost of living and rents were steadily rising, but not everyone had made money from the war. The income of those of average means had stayed the same and the latest increases in rents made it hard to find places to live. Ada and Aubrey teamed up again with William and Lizzie Winter and their four-year-old son Percy. They crowded into a three room apartment for a month or two, and then moved into the house of a touring theatrical family for several months. They ultimately lived in a succession of houses of theater people who were off on tour.

The Winters knew a variety of theater people—actors and managers— which enabled Ada to keep in touch with the theater world. William Winter had been the drama critic of the Alhambra as well as holding part-time jobs with several papers. It was still difficult for Winter and most journalists to make a living but Winter had a lucky break in 1865 when his friend Edward House left his post as drama critic for the New York Tribune. House recommended Winter as his replacement; he was hired, and held that post for forty-four years. Despite all their moving around, Lizzie had still managed to do a little writing, but she had decided she wanted a theatrical career and was taking more and more acting roles.

Whoever was left of the Bohemian group still gathered at Pfaff’s, welcomed again by genial Charley Pfaff. He had added a large garden, and a mural painted by scenic artists from a nearby theater. It was here that Henry Clapp made plans to revive the New York Saturday Press, and, finding another “angel,” was finally able to do it in August 5, 1865.

The Press was now located at 64 Nassau Street, and issues sold for three dollars a year or three cents a copy. It had a new format of twelve smaller pages with three print columns that was much easier to read than the older version. Clapp’s editorial objectives were the same as before: to promote good literature, and
puncture the balloons of arrogance, sham, and hypocrisy. He aimed to create a weekly “that shall be critical without being pedantic, dignified without being stupid, [and] sprightly without being superficial.”

Ada’s first article for the revived Press, “The Kingdom of Reserve,” explored this subject of style. She called the quality of “reserve” both absurd and pretentious, criticizing the idea that “goodness is synonymous with stolidity, and worth with dullness.” Ada contributed another article for the issue as well, a repeat of her description of the ideal woman of Bohemia, written years ago for the Press. This was followed by Charles Henry Webb’s description of the ideal male Bohemian. Webb had returned from California to take up again with the group at Pfaff’s. Webb, Ada, and Artemus Ward provided a link with the San Francisco Bohemians like Mark Twain and Bret Harte who would later be published in the new version of the Press.

Sadly decimated, the Pfaffians needed members. O’Brien and Wilkins were dead, and some of the other writers were away reporting on the war as correspondents. Whitman was still in Washington tending the Civil War wounded and Thomas Bailey Aldrich had returned to the Boston literary scene for good. Edmund Stedman had defected to the Round Table, whose regular policy was to trash the Bohemian journalists.

The Round Table was inaugurated in December, 1863 as a journal of opinion with an informal staff of contributors that included several Bohemians. In the beginning, the controversial weekly journal seemed to be following in the footsteps of the earlier Saturday Press, stating that it was trying to breathe some fresh air into literature, to do away with “prettiness” and sentimentality, and avoid literary criticism that falsely praised bad writing. There the resemblance ended. The Round Table was very prudish, and attacked anyone who veered away from conventional religion and morals. In February, 1864, it had savaged the Bohemian group for having too much control over journalism in New York, particularly in drama reviewing, and also for decadence and immorality in its members personal lifestyles as well as in their writing. This attack and the counter defense by Bohemian writers was reprinted and followed closely in early 1864 in California in the Era. In summer 1864, the Round Table was suspended temporarily, but came back stronger than ever by the summer of 1865 as a weekly review of literature, society, and art. The reappearance of Saturday Press that same summer no doubt gave the Round Table new motivation to attack the Bohemians.

Even though she did not have time to write for the Press anymore, Ada remained part of the Bohemian group at Pfaff’s while doing a weekly column for the Leader, and putting the finishing touches on a novel. She was at her humorous best in the Leader, scolding the writer of a piece called “Needle and Garden” who objected to women voting because she didn’t know how they could do it while managing their domestic concerns. Ada wrote that women were already doing so much that their lives would hardly be “interrupted by a voting spree.” She describes what the average middle-class and well-to-do women were up to as follows: “women are off at church, sewing societies, sanitary fairs, missionary caucuses, prayer meetings, shopping, attending the matinees of handsome pianists, and orient-eyed tragedians, Sunday schools, visiting and scandalizing each other.” But even so, she notes, “Dinners, husbands, cradles, and babies get rocked, tended, and cooked in spite of these things … There are some very decent arguments alleged against women voting – this is not one of them.”

On a national level a more profound level of strife finally came to an end with the Union victory on April 9, 1865. The New York Times headline the next day was “Thanks to God – Giver of Peace on Palm Sunday.” Bells pealed. New Yorkers went wild. Flags waved on Broadway, at all windows on Printing House Square, the hotels, office buildings, churches, and private dwellings from mansions to hovels. The flags ranged from giant-sized to the tiniest one-penny variety. Huge crowds surged through heavy rain to victory meetings. New Yorkers listened to speeches at the Post Office whose interior was decorated with red, white, and blue bunting. Pictures of Grant, Meade, Farragut, and other Union heroes were displayed.

No one knows how Ada felt about the end of the war, but she must have been concerned about what was happening to her family in South Carolina. The newspapers were full of news of Charleston. The New York Times had a correspondent there almost from the day the war ended. Sherman's bloody and fiery march through the South had led him near Charleston in February, 1865, but he turned away to Columbia, South Carolina. A holocaust followed; a fiery climax to his burning and looting of the South. Though Charleston was spared from Sherman, the city was already war-weary from years of siege. Many of the
buildings had been damaged in the siege bombardment, and many of its residents left. Those who remained were exhausted. Ada probably did not know then that her Grandfather Hugh Wilson had died in 1864, or that her cousin Paul Hamilton Hayne with his mother Emily, wife Minna, and son William had fled from the Union forces to end up impoverished and living in a shack near Augusta, Georgia. Ada’s brother Eugene was also undergoing hard times, after an illness caused his release from the Confederate Army.512

But however much Ada may have wondered about the fate of her kinfolk and friends, her life was firmly anchored in New York. Everyone there prepared to enjoy their first peacetime Easter in four years. Ads for Easter clothing and springtime home decorations crowded the newspaper pages. But within a week those cheerful columns changed to ads for mourning regalia, as New York mourned Lincoln’s death.

Actor and Southern sympathizer John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Abraham Lincoln as he watched a play at Ford’s Theater on Good Friday, April 14, 1865.513 Instead of being joyous, Easter Sunday services were packed with mourners numb with grief. “Awful Event” was the headline for news of the assassination detailed in front page, black-bordered columns in the Times. Flags flew at half-mast; homes and businesses all over the city were draped in black, and families even pinned black rosettes to their curtains.

New Yorkers grieved alongside the rest of the nation. But after the assassin was hunted and killed, and his conspirators rounded up, ordinary people quickly went back to everyday life. Ada was writing, meeting her fellow Bohemians at Pfaff’s for recreation, and keeping house catch as catch can, while she, Aubrey, and the Winters moved from place to place.

By the summer she and Aubrey were able to get away from New York City by renting a tiny rural cottage on Lake Ronkonkoma on Long Island. They were treated kindly by neighboring farmers who sent over treats to flesh out Ada’s budget meals. She was able to invite the Winters and their old friend Zavarr Wilmshurst to visit. Zavarr was able to come for a long visit but the Winters delayed, canceling several times because William was not feeling well.514

Ada sent Lizzie a letter in August, 1865, with instructions for the upcoming weekend. It was getting too cold for boating and swimming, but Ada thought William would benefit from a few days rest in the country. She urged the Winters not to disappoint her this time. She planned that she and Lizzie would do some writing and sewing, while William and Zavarr talked and Aubrey and Percy played. As for sewing, she requested Lizzie to bring her two and a half yards of good cotton cloth for making a chemise, if Lizzie would be anywhere near a fabric store. She also advised Lizzie to bring along enough towels for her family as Ada was already short of towels, and there was nowhere to buy them.

She wanted definite word of their coming in order to procure food supplies ahead of time from the wagons that came by selling food. As for typical menus: “I would not like you to make your debut here on a potato day. It would disgrace me as a housekeeper. You may fall on days when you dine on a platter of potatoes before you are done. But in the opening of the campaign, I would like for you to start off with good and varied provender.” She said that Zavarr was pleased with her cooking, and was also very eager to see the Winters.516

One wonders whether Ada and Zavarr shared a sexual relationship when they so often shared living quarters. Ada was very attractive, and Zavarr had written poems describing her physical attractions early on. She may not have been immune to Zavarr’s attractions either. He was bright, witty, and also had always been very protective of her. They may have experienced sexual feelings without expressing them fully. Certainly there was the ever-present risk of pregnancy for Ada. In exploring the possibility of a sexual relationship between Ada and Zavarr, his epic poem, “The Siren,” published in San Francisco in 1878 is of interest.517 He commented in the introduction that it is about a minister who fights temptation, and that the story was inspired by “someone in real life.” Its purpose was to deal with the “utmost … attractions of the sensual”, and “terrible consequences of … sensual indulgence.” In the poem are erotic descriptions of a minister being tempted by a “beautiful blonde temptress with a perfect body.”

Zavarr had been ordained a minister in England before coming to America. His wife Getty and Ada were both beautiful blondes. But Ada’s relationship with Zavarr lasted years after Getty died in 1860. Perhaps it was only after Ada’s death in 1874, that Zavarr could deal with his own conflicted sexual feelings about her in “The Siren.”518
Visitors or not, Ada did get a lot of writing done that summer on Long Island, even as she pondered whether her literary career had a future. In September of 1865, she wrote of her misgivings to Charles Warren Stoddard in San Francisco. Ada had finished the novel she had been working on, but she did not know whether she had the confidence to show it to a publisher. And yet she got “so many offers of literary work” she did not like to refuse them. Since she did not have time to write all those articles, she charged editors “such unconscionable prices that they are obliged to say they cannot afford it.”

She was writing for the Leader, and thanks to its editor Zavarr, *The New York Weekly Review*. She asked Stoddard, “I wonder if Frank Harte will be displeased by my publicizing in the ‘New-York Review’ his name & authorship of the ‘Condensed Novels.’ They are very clever & he has a high order of merit & ought to be better known”. Ada asked Stoddard to send some of his “best, short poems”, and she would see that they were republished in New York. She wished he would come to New York so she could give him the overflow of her work, and he could “earn name, fame and livelihood.” She offered to make him feel at home in New York, “a darling old town to my taste.” She also promised to get more autographs of prominent people for his collection.

And yet, despite Ada’s description of being deluged with offers of work, she was thinking of leaving the literary world “if things settle up so as to restore properties now considered lost in the South.” About the literary world she wrote: “You know I never loved it, which is probably the reason why I have not failed in it.” Despite her self-deprecatory words to Stoddard, she may have still hoped for financial and literary success from her novel. Indeed she probably wrote the novel to make money because so many of the women novelists were financially successful with this type of writing.

A busy winter of 1865-1866 lay ahead for Ada in completing the final revisions of her book, and trying to find a publisher for it. She contributed nothing more than the two early articles for the *Saturday Press* because her mind was on other things. Meanwhile Henry Clapp had Olive Logan, actress and playwright, substituting for Ada, sending clever letters satirizing the foibles of the summer visitors at Saratoga Springs.

The *Press* helped promote many new voices. Clapp encouraged Bret Harte and Mark Twain, still based in the West. Bret Harte was represented in the *Press* by two of his “Condensed Novels”, along with some other work. When Harte was editor of the *Overland Monthly* in California, he had published many of his local color stories like “The Luck of the Roaring Camp.” Those stories were collected into a volume by the same name in 1870, securing Harte’s fame on both coasts. He subsequently headed East, his original home, and never looked back. In 1871, the *Atlantic Monthly* would offer Harte a contract for $10,000 for 12 of his stories.

November 18, 1865, saw the publication of Mark Twain’s “Jumping Frog of Calaveras County,” in the *Press*, and Clapp also published several more of Twain’s stories. Charles F. Browne of the now defunct *Vanity Fair* discovered a new humorist, “Josh Billings” (Henry Wheeler Shaw), and Clapp published many of his articles, the first on November 18, 1865. Ada talked Clapp into publishing some of Stoddard’s verse, too. Survivors of the old guard at Pfaff’s were still well represented. Walt Whitman contributed his poignant poem about Lincoln’s death, “Oh Captain, My Captain” for the November 4, 1865 issue.

Clapp continued his loyalty to his old friend, Louis Moreau Gottschalk. In November he re-printed a recent article from Watson’s Art Journal in which Gottschalk told his side of the story about a scandal the musician had been involved with in San Francisco in September, 1865. Gottschalk had gone to San Francisco in April, 1865, to tour the West with plans to return to New York later. The musician was very successful, but just around the time San Franciscans were awarding him all sorts of honors, he was involved in a scandal where he was named, perhaps erroneously, as the seducer of a teenage student at the Oakland Female Seminary. Gottschalk’s acquaintance, Charles Legacy, had received a provocative letter from a young woman who was a student there. The girl’s school had very strict rules for its students’ behavior, and the student wanted to get around those rules by arranging a clandestine meeting with Legay. The girl and her friend wanted to meet Legay that evening somewhere away from the school and told him to bring a friend, suggesting Gottschalk, who had already played a concert at the Seminary.

The two men went to Oakland separately, and Gottschalk joined Legay on a carriage ride to meet up with the girl and her friend. They took a late night ride together, and by 2 a.m., the two men dropped off the girls. The students were then confronted by the irate head of the school, though later news revealed that the worst punishment the girls received was a reprimand about their unladylike conduct. Meanwhile
the basic facts of this story were picked up the press, and some of the papers blew it up to scandalous proportions. Some accounts said the girls did not get back to the school until daybreak, and were immediately expelled. Gottschalk and Legay's names were mentioned. Some papers reported more objectively, but the Daily Dramatic Chronicle of September 18, 1865 mentioned Gottschalk in connection with tarring and feathering, as part of a series of inflammatory comments. That day friends helped the musician leave San Francisco in disguise on the Colorado, bound for Panama. The scandal played its part in his decision not to stay in the United States and he ended up touring in South America. In the end, Gottschalk never returned to his native land. 529

Around this same time, the shadow of the terminal illness530 of George Arnold hung over all the Bohemians, and eventually affected the tone of the Press. Arnold and Ada had always been Clapp's favorites. Arnold, handsome and light-hearted, had been at Pfaff's from the earliest days of the Bohemian gatherings in 1857. He started out as a painter, soon turned to writing light verse, and his forte proved to be burlesque in verse and prose. His popular sketches in Vanity Fair and the Leader from the imaginary war correspondent “McArone” satirized the inept style of the war correspondents reporting the war. A favorite was “The Life and Adventures of Jeff Davis.”

Arnold was only in his mid-thirties as his life drew to its close, and his last articles for the Press were nostalgic remembrances of Ned Wilkins and Fitz-James O'Brien, those other princes of the Bohemian kingdom who died young: Wilkins of pneumonia in 1861, and O'Brien of lockjaw from a battle wound in 1862. The November 11, 1865 Press carried Arnold's obituary, written by broken-hearted Clapp. The Bohemian meetings at Pfaff's were sorrowful, and the pages of the Press were full of tributes not only from the Bohemians, but even from deserters from their ranks like Edmund C. Stedman. From far away California, Bret Harte wrote a tribute in the Press to his writing. He had never known Arnold personally, but Harte had always felt a kinship with the Bohemians. Harte's own series, "Bohemian Walks and Talks" in the Era, had emulated the Pfaffian journalists. Now his feeling of kinship was even closer with his own work being published in the Press.

Clapp’s friends dated Arnold’s death as the beginning of Clapp’s sad decline into chronic alcoholism. As late as 1869, Clapp was still writing bright columns for the Leader, 531but his drinking ultimately doomed him. Tammany cohorts like ex-mayor Oakey Hall kept Clapp alive: they saw that Clapp had funds, and food, and a chance to “dry out,” though he never stayed “dry” for long.532

Ada wrote probably her best column on literature for the Leader on September 2, 1865. Its purpose was to make a few informal remarks on American Literature particularly novels, essays, and short poems. She included comments on who she thought were the best popular writers and added that she did not think that the best of American novels, essays, and short poems could compare with the best of the English ones of the same kind, even allowing for extenuating circumstances. For her, American literature lacked “solidity and earnestness.” She thought American novelists in particular “took hold of life with a timorous finger and thumb,” whereas English novelists “grasped life with both hands.” Their novels “pulsated with life and death.” She faulted the writers of “the story of American life” as being concerned with a “transcript of ‘Down East’ caricatures, the record of dull Puritan biographies, or else medleys of morbid parsons, patriotic young men, and rose water love scenes.” She was also weary of four years of war novels, with a multitude of soldier heroes and nurse heroines that were not depicted with “skill” or “individuality of treatment.”533

Many examples she cited are of authors and books popular at the time that have since vanished. However two categories are of interest today: American writers that are considered now considered major, and writers she lauded, usually women, that are being re-discovered and re-evaluated today. Ada was enthusiastic about Herman Melville’s work, but wanted to know why he was producing little at that time. She praised his newest work The Refugee, but thought his great works seemed to be in the past. She had recently reviewed the latest edition of Oliver Wendell Holmes’s Autocrat of the Breakfast Table. When she read it, she felt it was “like chatting with an old friend.” However she wondered why he had published no new books of essays lately, and thought his novel Elsie Venner not good at all. Even though the heroine was modeled on Margaret Fuller, her unusual nature was supposed to have come because her mother, during pregnancy was bitten by a snake!535
She thought Harriet Beecher Stowe admirable as an essayist, and thought she had the potential to take 
“the widest elements of fiction in her hands and guide them,” but that she had not realized that potential 
because “too much politics has dried up the creative vein of her talent.” Ada admired Rebecca Harding 
Davis’s realistic subject matter in Life in the Iron Mills, and the vigor of her style and treatment, but thought 
at times she was guilty of “character-contortion.” She had high praise for Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard’s 
1862 novel The Morgesons, a darkly realistic novel that used the local color of Stoddard’s native area, 
Massachusetts. Ada thought Stoddard had made her novel out of “her own materials and built it up with a 
master hand.” She praised the “simple and probable” plot in which the events “all had meaning,” and were 
not thrown in “as a grocer adds another ‘scoop’ of sugar to weigh down the still elevated pound.” Ada 
recognized early on the development of the realistic novel, and especially the use of realistic local color. 

Ada thought there were plenty of talented writers, and women writers especially, that “had too low an 
opinion of their own merits,” and therefore imitated other writers, rather than “giving us the smallest 
morsel that is uniquely their own.” She thought too many women writers were isolated from the real world 
in their experiences, and needed “a little more groundwork, physical as well as mental.” She believed 
American male writers mostly stayed away from writing novels either because they thought novels were 
“feminine” territory, or because the pay for novels was poor.

As for Ada’s own novel, she did find a publisher for the book she had titled Only A Woman’s Heart. M. 
Doolady at 448 Broome Street was a small publisher active in New York City in the 1860s that published 
her book in April, 1866. Doolady’s 1866 Spring list also included Mrs. Margaret Hosmer’s Ten Years of a 
Lifetime, Charles Wells Russell’s Roebuck, a “Diamond” edition of Thackeray’s work, and a pirated 
translation of Don Quixote illustrated by Gustave Dore.

One glance at this list reveals that only Thackeray and Don Quixote are familiar names to us today. Ada’s 
book was no classic, either. Her journalistic work displayed a high degree of intelligence and writing skill. 
Reading her critiques of the fiction of her day show that she was well aware of what went into making 
good, readable fiction. However, she did not seem to be able to use that knowledge in writing fiction 
herself.

Even so, the novel represents a serious effort on Ada’s part to change the focus of her writing career, 
in order to become financially secure. A number of women writers in the 1850s had succeeded in making 
money by writing novels for women in spite the fact they often had to struggle with publishers to pay them 
what they were really worth. Ada hoped her book would be successful in the marketplace, and she tried 
to write what she thought her audience would enjoy. She herself admired successful writers of this type of 
book such as Mary Jane Holmes and E.D.E.N. Southworth, “fertile writers, with great facility and 
assurance, but [who] do not ever aim to produce books which can be classed under the head of 
literature.”

The negative reception of her book by critics whose judgment mattered to her was the deciding factor 
that led to her turning away from writing as a career: an important turning point in her life. The failure of 
herself novel to gain critical acclaim alone did not cause her to turn to a dramatic career; however it weighed 
most heavily in the series of events that precipitated that decision.

Only a Woman’s Heart is divided into three parts representing three phases of the heroine Laura 
Milsland’s life. Its plot echoes significant events in Ada’s life with its feisty yet indulged heroine who 
becomes entangled in a lifelong obsessive love for Victor, a talented actor and sculptor who is dark, 
sophisticated, and partly of foreign birth. Charles Warren Stoddard was quite right in saying that the book’s 
physical description of Victor combines Gottschalk with the actor, Edwin Booth, both noted for their 
talent, dark good looks, and for being matinee idols.

Like Gottschalk in Saratoga, Victor arrives in Dorn off-season and make a big impression on the 
heroine. Laura’s indifference and her unusual combination of being a tomboy-scholar intrigue him. At 
first, he merely wants to get to know her better, but then decides to awaken her love just to amuse himself. 
Outwardly Laura seems hostile but inwardly the innocent girl burns with conflicted passion. "Some blind 
animal instinct of self-preservation taught her to fly from him, and most conscientiously did she strive not 
to listen to his voice, nor to look at his face. But what chance has ardent, earnest simplicity . . . against a 
subtle knowledge of the world and human nature, united to that insidious personal magnetism which coils 
itself softly around the whole nature before it strikes the fatal blow."
Victor leaves to seek a stage career and becomes a success within high society where he meets beautiful, sophisticated women but he does keep his promise to return to Dorn. He pursues Laura who finally reveals to him that she is in love with him. Having made his conquest, Victor then tires of pursuing the innocent girl. Laura is furious and tells him he has led her on and taken advantage of her lack of sophistication. She threatens to follow him forever: “When you are whispering your lying words of love to other fools, I shall come between you like a spectre; I shall haunt you till I die, and after.”[541] Laura vows that she will go to the big city to find Victor. Thus the first part deals with the end of Laura’s school days and the loss of her garden-of-Eden innocence.

In Part One, the author also explores what the ideal education for young women might be in her description of the girls’ school, and the superior kind of education it offers. The school in Dorn was run on “exalted principles.” There was little punishment, but an abundance of rewards. “Everything was done to make study a delight. . .The road to learning was so strewn with flowers that even the most stupid and frivolous girls found themselves eagerly walking it.” Outside of time allotted to classes and study time, the girls could freely enjoy “the most boisterous and hoydenish games, as well as roaming at large the beautiful woodlands.”[542] The school’s encouragement of boisterous outdoor activity certainly runs counter to what was considered proper for young women of the day. And how different from Ada’s experience of her “girl-slaughtering” female relatives making her give up her tomboyish ways to become a lady!

No display of “hypocrisy, malice, dishonesty, and falsehood” was allowed. The result of this education was a “set of scholars who were the best educated in the State . . .honest and high-principled . . .abounding in health and high spirits and yet who lacked all skill and coquetry and drawing-room graces.” They were of a “rich, solid, and endurable fabric, but in a clumsy shape, ready to be cut out and formed by the world and its usages.”[543]

As for the future of young women, the graduation scene in Part One describes the schoolgirls as “technically announced to begin life, as though there was a very broad and varied path open to them.” Yet society decrees that these educated girls must now concentrate on getting a husband. The author characterizes the life of the female student as having “a reality and distinctiveness in her ways and aims there, that her future life necessarily lacks. . . the getting of husbands after school-days is a very indistinct aim. You must get one, and you must not make any efforts for it—you must secure him by running away from him. . .this whole female duty of making wives of themselves becomes a very mystic, spectral affair.”[544]

The author foreshadows Laura’s fate at this point. “Many were the times in her after life when Laura looked back upon her school days, as the only period. . . in which her existence meant anything.” Her schooldays were “when her senses, powers, perceptions were worked up to the roundest harmony and beauty, and then thrown over by stern fate to rust and inaction; she thought of them. . .when all her beauty, intellect, and brilliancy were in vain, and she stood outside the gates of Hope as they closed upon her, and heard their adamantine clang echo down all the inexorable vista of her years.”[545]

“Stern fate” has other things in mind for Laura than to enrich her own life with the fruits of her education, or to use them to raise the cultural level of her home as a traditional wife and mother. By the end of Part One, Laura has chosen her principal aim to be making herself lovable to Victor.

Part Two begins with Laura in the big city. She is instrumental in reuniting her rich uncle with the Milsland family and as an heiress to his fortune becomes a beautiful, fashionably turned-out young woman. The author gives elaborate descriptions of her beautiful clothes, and the elegant social life Laura and her family live in their new surroundings. Laura has had to work hard turning her ugly duckling self into a swan. Her skinny body has become curvaceous thanks to fencing lessons and body-building sports. She goes to bed each night with hand cream and special gloves on to transform her rough hands. She thinks Victor will love her as a beautiful sophisticate and rejected her in the past because she was an awkward, country girl. Formerly she was a bright, good-hearted girl with a rough exterior. Now she has become a willful person, obsessed with unrequited love, and unpleasant to everyone despite her beautiful, fashionable outer self.

The author develops two sub-plots dealing with Agnes, her sister, and Charlie, her half-sister. Neither woman seems destined to achieve happiness in marriage. Agnes has married a penniless actor, Josie Willister, who soon runs through her marriage settlement. Meanwhile Laura’s older half-sister Charlie is
jealous of her when Charlie’s suitor Mr. Elphinstone becomes enamored of Laura. Laura scorns him in a very cruel way, and he marries Charlie to be near Laura, and revenge himself.

Part Two ends with Laura defying Elphinstone’s wishes to enjoy her sexual favors in return for sharing the inheritance. She leaves their house determined to make it on her own. “All her youth, beauty, talent, education...had brought her nothing but this. . .her spirit was cast forth naked to the tempests of life. . .And yet she was richer. . .as much richer as the angel is above the beast, for who shall say, it does not all profit a woman, to lose the whole world, and gain her own soul.” So Part Three begins with Laura bereft of most of her worldly goods and elegant surroundings.

In Part Three, she must endure trials to become humble. She achieves inner beauty of soul, and her looks become as plain as her life. She still loves Victor, but eventually gives up the obsessive quality of that love. Part Three opens with Victor paying a visit to Laura who now makes her home with Agnes and Josie Willister, and their baby daughter in a shabby neighborhood. Victor really does not like Laura, but feels that a gentleman does not discard social acquaintances just because they lose their money. Laura has given up the idea of suing Elphinstone for her rightful share of the estate, because she knows that women are treated unfairly in courts of law. She is stimulated by the idea that poverty will be a challenge. She does not want a “semi-genteel, lacquered poverty.” She wants to learn “how to be poor – how to work.” She contemplates taking a job, but there are few available for a lady who has fallen on hard times.

Victor calls on Laura often, and begins to genuinely like her because “she seemed to him so much more human, now that she could laugh, like others; now that she had left the grand, gloomy pedestal of woe on which she had poised herself like a double dyed Niobe, and had come down to the natural interests of humanity.” Laura still loves Victor, but will accept a small place in his life as a friend.

Laura finally gets “copy work” from a lawyer, Mr. Middleton, a fine, sensitive person with only good intentions. Victor becomes jealous when he realizes that Mr. Middleton overpays Laura for her work because the lawyer is falling in love with her. He offers to help Laura financially so she won’t have to work for the lawyer, but proud Laura will accept no financial help. She does not want to lay down her self-respect. “Think of how little I have left on earth. . .but I cherish that; it’s all I have left to me.”

Victor tells Laura that he feels responsible for her because he fears that he is the cause of her present circumstances. She acknowledges Victor wasn’t “blameless,” but is aware that she has “no one but myself to blame. . .it was because I needed to love you.” Her overwhelming passion for him, once kindled by him, grew out of her own self-absorption. She feels she owes him her redemption. She’s lost youth, heart, and many of her hopes, but “their mortality has put on immortality--I owe you a lost world, and I owe you the gain of my own soul.” She doesn’t want his money, because her debt to him “is too heavy to bear now.”

By the end of the novel Victor admits to himself that he has truly fallen in love with Laura, but is afraid she could never love him again because of the bitter past. In a climactic scene during a theater performance where Victor is performing as Benvenuto Cellini, the Renaissance artist, and sculptor he unconsciously reveals his love for her. In this role Victor models a clay portrait bust of his leading lady onstage, blending his talents as actor and sculptor. However he is so distracted by the sight of his beloved Laura in the audience that he begins to forget his lines. Finally the actor models a portrait of Laura, not the leading lady. The manager is angry and brings down the curtain.

Victor leaves the theater--he is heartbroken because Laura is leaving, perhaps for many years. She has signed on as companion to the lawyer’s sister, the frail Miss Middleton, for a voyage to Europe by way of St. Thomas in the Caribbean. The lawyer plans to meet them in Europe, and persuade Laura to marry him. His family has tried to dissuade him because Laura bears the stigma of having been wooed and rejected by Victor. Mr. Middleton will not “be the first one to move his wife’s heart”. The lawyer feels this experience has made more of a true woman of Laura. Her heart is not “wax, that would melt and blur. . .in the ‘fires of feeling’. . .but gold, that would come out firmer and more refined from it.”

Victor surprises Laura on board ship after the voyage begins. They melt into each other’s arms under the southern moon, declare their love and even Laura’s employer is charmed by the happy couple. Suddenly the ship is wrecked – Laura and Victor’s lifeboat, rowed by a crew member, becomes separated from the main party who are rescued first. After three days, Victor dies of sunstroke after atoning with many words for how unkind he has been to Laura. Laura tries to save him by shading him with her long, beautiful raven
tresses. Then she dies of a broken heart, though the rescuers, who arrive too late to save Victor and Laura, say the physical cause is an aneurysm of the heart. It is, after all, only a woman's weak heart.

A woman passenger on the rescuing ship goes in to look at the bodies of the lovers awaiting burial at sea. She wonders if they were in love or married to each other, and thinks they look somehow alike: “… I thought I detected a likeness between them … Nor. . .can I separate them. No sooner does memory recall his face than hers blends with it…I can only remember them as one.” Next they are committed together, “to the tomb of the great sea.”

During the novel, their differences have been revealed again and again. They are a pair where “never the twain shall meet.” At one point in the story Laura despairs of ever making Victor love her, and she speaks of “God's dark decree that she and Victor were two parallel lines in His universe” that can never meet and be transfused into each other. At the end of the book, after Victor and Laura die, one feels that in the author's scheme of things they will meet in heaven and be together in eternity. What mathematics and the ups and downs of Victor and Laura’s relationship do not allow, God and the afterlife will take care of.

Ada had first discussed how reasoning cannot control the strength of love felt for someone who does not return love in her article “Asymptotes” in the Charleston College Magazine, March, 1855. “Asymptotes” is the mathematical term for parallel lines that cannot meet, and are not even in the same plane. Ada concluded that the feelings of the heart and rational analysis are “asymptotes” and that one must handle the feelings by finding some other focus than an impossible love. This is what Ada had done in her own life by finding an “active sphere”: throwing her energies into writing and acting. However she herself clearly had difficulty integrating her feelings about herself and her life into the writing of a novel that she hoped would please audiences used to a traditional formula.

Ada included both Gottschalk’s rejection and her long-standing feelings for him as an integral part of her book. Laura has to go through many trials in Part Two and Part Three to become a truly worthwhile person. That alone, would be enough of a reward if Ada’s novel fit the pattern of how the ideal heroine fared in many novels of that day. However Only a Woman’s Heart is not typical in its focus on an innocent young heroine who is seduced and rejected, but then continues to express feelings of love for her seducer. As Nina Baym points out in her book Woman’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870, when the plot of this type of American novel for nineteenth century women readers showed an innocent heroine seduced and then rejected by a very bad man, the triumph after trials of the heroine would be “a strengthened character and marriage with a much more desirable man than the seducer.”

But in Ada’s novel, the heroine does not marry the “good man;” the lawyer Middleton and marriage is hardly held up as a worthwhile goal: in the novel Ada shows no marriages that are satisfactory. The heroine’s sister, Agnes, is swept off her feet, and married to a fortune-hunter, Josie Willister, who runs through her marriage settlement, and is abusive to her verbally and physically. Elphinstone marries Charlie to get her money, and power over Laura and Charlie is so happy to marry him she turns a blind eye to Elphinstone’s true intentions even though she is aware that he is up to no good.

As far as characterization, most of Ada’s female characters are typical of the novels of the day. Agnes is kind, beautiful, long-suffering and conventional in her thinking. Julia is a spoiled belle. However, Laura as a fifteen year old doesn’t resemble other fictional women of her day-- Laura is much like Ada as a fifteen year old. One remembers Paul Hamilton Hayne’s description of Ada at that age running barefoot through the woods on their family trip to a summer resort, and Ada’s own description of herself as a tomboy.

The male characters in the novel are one-dimensional, and not admirable for the most part. We see little of the lawyer, Middleton, who is kind, and has good intentions toward Laura. Mr. Milsland, Laura’s father and her uncle are weak-willed though they hold paternalistic power. Laura demonstrates that by using wiles sweetened with a show of affection, a woman can often manipulate this type of man to get what she wants. Unfortunately, she learns that others like Elphinstone also can manipulate her weak father with evil intent. Josie Willister is a fortune hunter who is ineffectual, and Elphinstone is a fortune hunter who is malevolent. They both make romantic overtures to Laura, even though they are married to her sisters.

The psychological portrait of Victor, a man, spoiled by the attentions of women, and a charmer who impulsively enters new love affairs without staying around to deal with the consequences, is not a simple one. Of course his character has to bear the burden of being first the villain, and then the hero, though
both as Laura’s beloved. Despite his actions toward Laura in Part One, Victor is not without a conscience. Even when Victor woos Laura and then rejects her when he has conquered her heart, he knows he is not doing the right thing. He does offer friendship when she has fallen on hard times. Later, he offers Laura financial aid, though in one instance, it’s motivated by his jealousy of Middleton.

Victor is also a successful actor and sculptor. Charles Warren Stoddard mentioned that Victor as a character is a composite of “the fickle fascination of Gottschalk, the once idolized pianist and composer, and the art of Edwin Booth.” Ada captures the charisma of both Booth’s acting performances and Gottschalk’s manner in his musical performances in the following, sexualized description: “. . .he possessed that rare and mysterious personal magnetism, which above all things else, woos, enchains, and ravishes an audience.”

The author uses humor in the novel. Sometimes it provides a touch of comic relief that does not interfere with the ongoing tone and narrative flow of the novel. For example, this description in Part One of Victor’s stagecoach ride, returning to Dorn to see Laura once more. It is a humorously exaggerated version of one form of travel of the times: "Getting up at five in the morning was a disgusting sacrifice . . .then rattling and battling all day in a rough, rickety, dusty, beastly old coach, seated in the middle. . .between a fat farmer. . .on one side, and a distressed and distressing consumptive invalid on the other, combined with a breakfast. . .of the grossest kind of fried pork, and coffee that tasted like a combination of soot and tallow were circumstances to rasp the temper of a cherub, not to mention a fretful, nervous, young man. . .with dyspepsia.”

However the author uses humor in many instances that cause inconsistencies in the tone of the story. An example from this same section deals with Victor’s reasons for coming back to Dorn. While away from Dorn where he awakened Laura’s innocent love and promised to return, he has enjoyed success with the ladies, as well as success on the stage. He has been spending his time in “luxurious private houses where delicately bred ladies made a pet of him,” and were falling in love with him. He liked the usual attention, but eventually, “somehow he managed to get rid of them, taking pleasure in flirting for its own sake.” But while flirting, he stays out too late at night, and because of eating “dainty suppers” the ladies prepare, he develops “a very disagreeable form of dyspepsia.” This makes him yearn for a simpler way of life and reminds him of “poor, simple, earnest little Laura. . .True, when he saw Laura, he attributed his return to memory and faith. . .if those words are duplicates for pheasant pate’ and anything ‘aux truffles’ . . .” His upset stomach makes him “blue”, and he yearns for simpler ways of life, “earlier hours. . .and sturdy appetites of Dorn. Laura was an afterthought which came in dimly along with the corn-cakes, and long after the eggs.” That description of Victor’s life away from Dorn and reasons for return follows descriptions of Laura trying to seriously work on her schoolwork and forget about him. The emphasis on the contrast between their lives and personalities is undercut by the author’s use of humor concerning Victor and his “dyspepsia” and how that brings him back to Laura.

Ada does this again and again, mixing the satirical and sentimental in the book, and it does interfere with the consistency of tone and narrative flow. One thinks of her columns: among them, a few of them were satirical and a few lugubriously confessional. However, she never mixed the tone. In this book, she does mix the humorous and satirical with the ongoing serious tone of the book in ways that often create awkwardness.

This novel had to bear the burden of Ada’s inexperience in writing fiction, as well as the added burden of being the vehicle by which Ada worked out her feelings about Gottschalk. Throughout her life Ada had many close friendships with men, but when it came to passionate love, early on, her love relationship with Gottschalk, disappointed her. Ada had been like Laura, putting the man she loved on such a pedestal that he could never live up to her expectations in real life. And she, like Laura, may not have been able to recognize Gottschalk’s inability to sustain a love relationship, because she wanted so much to believe in her own ability to attract and hold on to a worldly, sophisticated man.

Ada was trying to exorcise those feelings with this book. The thread of disappointment in her enduring unrequited love for a beloved one who rejects her is a constantly recurring theme in her writing beginning with “Pangs of Despised Love” in the Atlas, December 28, 1856. Though she and Gottschalk were friendly acquaintances moving in the same circles by the mid-1860s, in her novel she still struggled with unfinished emotional business.
We do not know how much of Ada’s unpublished 1859 novel Asphodel survives in this novel. However, an earlier version of the last three chapters of Only a Woman’s Heart were in Ada’s long story “The Star Above the Storm” published for the first time in the Golden Era July, 1864. This story tells what happened in the first two-thirds of Only a Woman’s Heart in the first three paragraphs, and then most of it deals with what happened after Laura and Victor meet again on shipboard. It includes a reconciliation scene where Laura reveals a more mature understanding of Victor’s original seduction, and subsequent abandonment. It also includes Victor and Laura’s achievement of a more mature love, and their death in the shipwreck.

Perhaps the scandal of Gottschalk’s alleged seduction of a schoolgirl in San Francisco in September of 1865 influenced Ada to make Laura a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl at the beginning of Only a Woman’s Heart. Her age makes Victor’s seduction of Laura even more caddish. When word got out about the Gottschalk scandal in the fall of 1865, Ada would have had time to revise her book, since it was not published until April, 1866. However, Laura and Victor’s first encounter was not like Ada and Gottschalk’s first meeting in real life. At 21 Ada was not exactly a tomboyish teen-ager when she and Gottschalk first became acquainted in late 1855. However she may have felt herself, newly arrived from South Carolina, quite provincial compared to Gottschalk, already an internationally known pianist and composer.

It is impossible to find out how well Only a Woman’s Heart sold; the edition available on microfilm and microfiche today is the 1866 first edition. Certain facts about the literary marketplace of that day are known--Ada’s wish to write a novel to make money was not unrealistic. There were novels written by women that were best-sellers. Susan Warner’s The Wide Wide World (1851) was “the first American novel to reach the million mark”, and was reprinted in 13 editions in two years and was translated into several languages. The plot of this book covers the moral development of a young heroine, Ellen, as she “learns to submit to heavenly and earthly authority”. Obviously there was a huge audience who enjoyed reading books intended to educate them and improve their own morality. Ada was trying to attract the large audience of woman readers who enjoyed popular novels for the sheer pleasure of escape. No doubt she thought her love story, even with its unusual sad ending might do that. However she had her heroine go through trials that improved her morally just to make sure readers would think it offered something more than just an entertaining read.

Ada’s book did not go through certain processes that would have insured better sales. If Only a Woman’s Heart had been first serialized in a popular paper like Robert Bonner’s New York Ledger with its large circulation she would have had name recognition with a larger audience. Bonner did not carry advertising in his own paper, but spent a fortune advertising the Ledger’s attractions like serialized novels in other papers. Unfortunately for Ada, the audience for “a good read” may not have overlapped much with the intellectual and avant-garde persons who were interested in the type of writing she did in the short-lived Press and the Leader. Additionally, if Ada had her articles collected and published in a book, before publishing her novel, she would have had more built-in reader interest when her novel came out.

The book was reviewed by critics who were negative for the most part. Ada was not able to bear the negative criticism. Like her performance in Camille where she was Camille, the writing in her book revealed a part of her own life that she had strong feelings about. Furthermore she took pride in all the writing she had done for the Saturday Press, The New York Leader, and The Golden Era. Most of her colleagues considered her a good writer. Thus she was terribly discouraged by negative criticism of how the book was written, and especially hurt by a savage personal attack on her in a leading literary journal, The Round Table. This journal was already on the attack against the Bohemians because of the resurrection of the Press the summer before in 1865. The appearance of the Bohemian Queen’s novel in April, 1866, gave The Round Table the opportunity to give her book a negative review while also trashing Ada herself and the rest of the Pfaffians.

The reviewer pointed out that Ada was one of “that set of writers who call themselves Bohemians, and who have already been exposed and rebuked in The Round Table.” He claimed she had gained her title of the Queen of Bohemia, not by any “extraordinary talent or popularity but because she was one of the few women to join in Bohemian orgies-- “to sit with them in a common lager-bier cellar on Broadway, and to be recognized as their associate and friend.” Since the journal had paid so much attention to Ada’s Bohemian peers, the reviewer felt “it would not be fair. . .should we allow her majesty to pass without expressing our full and candid opinion of her production.” Indeed, it is a very long review.
The reviewer perceived her book as a new beachhead aimed at extending the Bohemian kingdom into popular literature, just as the revived Press reinforced their efforts to dominate New York journalism. The writer said the Bohemians had once had too much influence on journalism, but their power now was weakened. Some “who had flourished like rats...had “crawled away to other haunts,” some, “by far the best of them,” had died, and some had “reformed, and are now earning a decent and honest livelihood.” No doubt the reviewer saw himself as fitting into that last category.563

Knowing the prejudice of the reviewer, it is difficult to separate out the two elements in The Round Table’s review of Only a Woman’s Heart. The review of the book itself is overwhelmed by the Bohemian bashing. But though the reviewer may have hated Ada as a Bohemian, he was on target in faulting Ada for her lack of skill in handling plot and dialogue, noting that the book lacked originality but if “artistically elaborated” could have been a “readable book.” The review essay identifies what is wrong with the book, but then attributes all these problems, not to Ada’s lack of skill, but to the fact that Ada, as a Bohemian, does not understand how “refined and polite society” operates. The review even disparaged Ada’s description of theater life behind the scenes, a small part of the book, but probably the most interesting and realistic.564

The reviewer does reveal that he himself may have mixed feelings about Bohemian life. He says that anyone reading the book hoping to find out more about how Bohemians live will be disappointed and that at least that subject might have been “piquant” and “interesting.” One wonders why Ada did not write more out of her own experience. Even if Ada’s life as a Bohemian might have been too racy for readers she hoped to attract, surely her own experiences as a woman writer would have been interesting to them.565

It seems obvious that this reviewer was likely to have been a former Bohemian turned respectable who missed the fun of the disreputable times at Pfaff’s cellar, even while he says that the Bohemian lifestyle and writing are no good. By the end of the review he rants that Bohemians know nothing of ladies and gentlemen and society, and: “associating only with their own petty clique, they make incompetent critics and poor authors ... not one of them has produced anything permanent even in the lighter branches of literature, and for them to encourage their Queen to undertake ... a novel was simply absurd.”566

The Round Table had become as well known for its caustic reviews as Ada was known for hers, though her reviewing had mellowed since her days at the Press in 1859-60. One might find many things to criticize about Ada’s book, but The Round Table’s review was overkill. Around the same time, another author, Charles Reade, felt his book Griffith Gaunt had been unfairly criticized. He successfully sued The Round Table for their review of his book that said it was “indecent” and “morally unfit for introduction into families.”567

One might have expected a review of Ada’s book to be published in the Press as a matter of course, but that was not to be. The Press was on its way out when Ada’s book was released, and only mentioned it in their list of new books for sale at Brentano’s in one of their last issues. By June 2, 1866 the Press was out of business with no explanation offered for its demise. It had never been financially secure, and whoever did manage its finances was not skilled.

This lack of support from the Press was partly mitigated by Ada’s colleague Juliet Corson’s review in the Leader, Ada’s home base as a columnist. Corson was clever enough not to “consider the book in a strictly critical sense,” and left to others “a parade of its faults or deficiencies.” She intended to give “an impartial view of its contents,” and let whoever read it decide whether it had merit.568 In retelling the plot, Corson concentrated on the ups and downs of Laura and Victor’s love affair and also quoted passages of Laura’s long interior monologues about her love for Victor.

Corson pointed out an underlying “vein of quiet humor” in the novel, good for a “satisfactory chuckle” now and then.569 In thinking about this in relation to the book as a whole, it seems possible that if Ada had written a novella length parody on the conventional elements used in many “women’s novels” (just as she often wrote short parodies of other topics in her columns), or even of a particular novel, she could have produced an original and successful work.570 Instead, she mixed her sentimental and satirical elements, not always with the best results.

Corson does defend the unconventionality of Laura as a heroine first introduced as a scratched-up, feisty, tomboy used to a fist-fight or two. She felt that Ada had succeeded in avoiding a “stereotyped” heroine, and the depiction of this “bright, spirited girl” showed “raw elements” of a character that would develop in the book to be “component parts of a brave and noble nature.” Corson admitted that Ada at
times ran “rough-shod” over many rules of writing, but thought her style mainly “free of ostentation, the language clear, and the unity of action well-preserved.”

A third review, in the *New York Times*, is short and negative but had no personal axe to grind. That reviewer could not bear the heroine introduced as a tomboy who “receives and gives ‘black eyes’ and glories in them,” and thought the main characters were “women who ought to have been men, and men who ought to have been women.” All in all, the reviewer believed the novel focused on “worthless characters;” the story was not “artistically told,” and the style was “exceedingly faulty.”

Fortunately at the very time that the book came out greeted by these mostly discouraging reviews, Ada was engaged in something she truly loved. She was busy rehearsing, and then performing a role in a Shakespearean production that she gained through Lizzie Winter’s efforts on her behalf. Lizzie had decided to concentrate on acting after her successful acting debut in April, 1864. Her contacts with theater people gained from William’s drama reviewing helped give her access to their world. She was talented enough that in 1866, Edwin Booth cast her to play Katherine to his Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew* at Booth’s Winter Garden theater. Ever loyal to Ada, when Lizzie was cast in the April, 1866 performance of *Merry Wives of Windsor* at Brooklyn Academy of Music, she managed to get Ada the role of Mistress Page, one of the beautiful married women who plays havoc with Falstaff’s heart.

The summer of 1866 gave Ada a chance to heal her emotional wounds, and think about her future career plans. During that summer, she and Edward and Marie Howland comfortably shared a furnished cottage on Lake Ronkonkoma on Long Island. The Howlands had just returned from Europe where Marie had gone after her divorce was final in 1863 to join Edward who was traveling for a rare book company, Philes and Company. They waited out the war while living in and writing about the Fourieristic community at Guise, France. Before returning to the US, they married in Scotland on August 12, 1865.

The everyday household on Long Island consisted of Marie, Ada, seven-year-old Aubrey, and Marie’s niece, Mabel Moulton, the four-year-old daughter of Marie’s sister Ada Moulton who was divorced from her first husband and working in New York City. Edward joined them each weekend, taking the Long Island Railroad from New York with other men who worked in the city during the week, and came on weekends to join their families in rented country cottages. In this way the women and children avoided the heat and congestion of summertime Manhattan.

Marie remembered what a delightful summer that was. In the morning Ada and Marie made a hearty breakfast cooking oatmeal in large iron pots. Then they dressed Aubrey and Mabel in “rough, strong, playsuits.” The children could then do whatever they wished – make mud pies, or “even take mud baths which they often did.” Then the women took the children to the lake to go rowing, fishing, and swimming. Ada was proud of teaching Aubrey to swim and row a boat.

In the afternoon they returned to the cottage, and washed and dressed. The children dressed in everyday clothes, and understood that after dinner they could not run around acting wild, or make any more mud pies. The penalty was to be sent to their room, and excluded from family doings in the living room. After a large late afternoon meal, the adults enjoyed conversation, and often had guests, while the children were supposed to play quietly.

Though they enjoyed playing alone, Aubrey and Mabel did not get on well when playing together, invariably getting into fights and biting and kicking each other. It was probably because they were both only children, and were not used to sharing with playmates. Marie wanted to teach them to get along with each other, but Ada said, “Oh let them fight.” Edward agreed: he thought it was funny when Ada remarked, “Their fighting probably presages matrimony.” The prescience of this was revealed in 1881 when Aubrey and Mabel did marry and have a son. Unfortunately their childhood quarrels predicted the emotional tone of their marriage, but that time was far away from that summer of 1866.

Underneath the peaceful surface of everyday life, Ada was quite anxious, and it did not take much stress for her to get very upset. There was a local legend that their house was haunted by its former owner – a sea captain who had committed suicide at sea. On windy nights there were unusual moaning sounds. Marie described them as: “long, sustained wails, louder and softer, the blood-curdling groans of sensational romance.” Ada was terrified, and Marie had to sleep in her room with her on stormy nights when the sounds were at their worst, even though Marie reassured her that the sounds might be coming from a real source like faulty insulation of the roof. Meanwhile Edward was only there on weekends when there were
no storms that year, and though he often enquired after “Captain McCormick,” their ghost, and talked about him as a member of their family, he never heard the ghostly groans. He tried to get rid of Ada’s fearfulness by joking, but was not successful.576

As if Ada were not scared enough, one night as they listened to the wind and frightening moans, they also heard the sounds of horses trampling their flower garden. Marie wanted Ada to go out with her and drive the horses away before they got into their carefully tended kitchen garden. Ada was shaking so hard from fear of ghosts and rampaging horses, her teeth were chattering. She told Marie she would not leave that room for all the wealth in the world. So Marie had to go out into the stormy night and lead the balky animals out through the gate, hoping not to get trampled herself.

Late in August, 1866, Marie took Mabel back to the New York where they joined Edward and Marie’s sister Ada Moulton. Edward and Marie had found an adequate place to live on the corner of 9th and 22nd Street. They both had plenty of work — Edward wrote for *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Weekly*, and also wrote books, and Marie divided her time between writing articles, and her work with the stenographic corps of the New York State Constitutional Convention. But the Howlands were tired of the congestion and the pace of New York life. They decided to move within the next year to the rural town of Hammonton, New Jersey, a truck farming community that nevertheless had good rail connections with Philadelphia, and New York.577

After making forays back in the theater world, Ada was planning to leave the city to work with a provincial stock company. After Ada played Shakespeare in April, she had gone out with the touring company of her old acquaintance, the manager William Stuart. Their appearance in Rhode Island was a fiasco. She also tried acting with a theater company in Albany, New York for a few weeks, but that did not work out either. One observer remembered that Ada shrank from everyone at that time. She thought they were gossiping about her notorious past life and no doubt some of them were.578

After going around to theatrical agencies in New York, Ada realized her best opportunity to go on the stage permanently would be to leave New York for a stock company in the South or the West, and to take minor roles. There is a scene in *Only a Woman’s Heart* where Agnes, Laura’s sister, has made her acting debut and is informed that despite her beautiful appearance onstage, her acting ability is limited. The best career as an actress she can hope for is with a small, provincial stock company. Ada had written that a year before her decision, so even then she had been realistic about where the best chance for a successful acting career lay for someone like herself with good looks and limited talent.

But if Aubrey accompanied her, it would be a difficult life for him. They would have to live in a hotel room in a new city. And he was now old enough to start school. When Ada discussed her plans for Aubrey with the Howlands, they were more than happy to have Aubrey board in their home. He was already like a family member and they also needed the extra money to make their new start. So the Howlands’ decision to move to the country affected Ada’s plans for the future too.

In Fall, 1866, Ada wrote Charles Warren Stoddard that she had made a decision to make a major change in her life: “I have been gradually separating myself from literature all Summer, and now am giving it up entirely for the present, honestly believing that I mistook my vocation when I attempted it.” Ada considered the bad reviews for *Only a Woman’s Heart* her first literary failure, and it was obvious to her that she was not going to be able to support herself as a writer of popular novels.579

She wrote that one of the New York Sunday papers had even reported that Bret Harte, now “well-known critic” of the *Californian*, “pronounces Ada Clare’s novel to be a failure.” Ada had read the original article, and knew Harte did not write it, “because I generally can detect his style at a glance.” However it must have disturbed her that her book was receiving bad reviews as far away as California.580

Perhaps other things affected her decision about writing. One wonders whether editors really were clamoring for her work as she had written to Stoddard earlier. She had not continued writing for the *Leader* after 1865, perhaps putting all her efforts into writing and marketing her novel. Probably most important element in her decision was that the demise of the *Saturday Press*, and the devastating blows struck to the original core of the Bohemian group by death and defection left Ada without a literary support group. As for her own personal support group in New York City, the Howlands would be leaving the city shortly to be followed by the Winters moving to Staten Island.
These were some of the things she was likely thinking about when she signed a contract for eight months with the New Memphis Theater for the season 1866-1867 to become a stock company actress playing minor roles. She wrote Stoddard: “I will be some distance from New York,” and “of course will not take up a pen during that time.” She would also change her name and use Agnes Stanfield on stage as well as personally. She didn’t want the same kind of gossip circulating about her that she had faced in Albany. On a happier note, she was happy to send him Edwin Booth’s autograph—a prize for his autograph collection. She was “delighted” to hear from him often, and begged him to keep writing to her, despite her tardy replies.

Years later Stoddard commented about this major change in her life: “She no doubt felt the non-success of her novel, and was truly glad to lay down her pen and turn her face to the footlights.” He felt she found consolation there. Whether she found consolation or not, she would certainly find a very different life than she had ever experienced before.
Ada Clare had a hard adjustment to the exhausting life of a stock company actress, but she felt she had made the right decision for herself, and she stuck with it. Hadn't she always wanted to be an actress, and kept trying it again and again regardless of her failures? Her return to acting, though perhaps not a particularly realistic career choice, shows her strong motivation. As early as 1855, she had realized she could not stand the monotony of doing the same thing day in and day out, and life in a stock company was one of constant change. Ada often took several different roles every week and she may have found psychological fulfillment taking on a different persona with each role: the ultimate in changing names and personalities.

She had always enjoyed backstage life, especially the camaraderie with fellow actors, and she already knew most of the visiting stars. This could never replace the kind of companionship and support she had enjoyed at Pfaff’s, but that group had disintegrated with the death or defection of so many of the original Pfaffians. And now her close friends the Howlands were leaving New York.

The Howlands had been able to scrape together enough money to purchase property in Hammonton, New Jersey even though Edward had lost most of his inheritance because of changes in the cotton market during the Civil War and his investments in the Saturday Press. Hammonton was a small truck-farming community on the main railway line to Philadelphia, and real estate developers were already promoting it as a suburban retreat for city dwellers. Edward studied farming methods, and learned to successfully raise whatever food they needed and sell the surplus. Even though Marie had early gone to factory work, she had been raised in the country, and she soon became successful keeping poultry and selling eggs. After first living in an old barn on their property, the Howlands eventually built a house they named Casa Tonti where they would lead an idyllic life for the next twenty years.

Their country life still allowed them time to write articles and books, and keep in touch with their literary friends in New York who often came to visit. They started a private school for the local children, and their presence was very much welcomed by this small community. Their farm was not only a haven for Aubrey, who the Howlands treated like their own son while he was living with them, but it was also “a place to come to” for Ada. In between theater engagements, she could rest there, renew ties with her son and her friends, and go up to New York occasionally.

This new space with old friends eased Ada’s transition from her identity as urban literary Queen of Bohemia to travelling actress with no permanent home. Taking a new name, Agnes Stanfield, was the most telling sign of Ada’s break with the past. Only once before had she changed her name: when she became Ada Clare of New York, and left behind Ada Agnes McElhenney, and her family and birthplace, Charleston, South Carolina. Then she had been leaving the South – and now, though she never returned to her birthplace, she headed South once more to start her new life as Agnes Stanfield-- first in Memphis, and later touring through the South with other stock companies. Scarcely two years later she would take yet another new name, Ada Agnes Noyes, when she finally married. But first she would serve a new apprenticeship in the world of the provincial resident stock company.

Letters to friends from Memphis reveal her some of her feelings about her new name and her new life. To Charles Warren Stoddard she wrote that she was now Miss Agnes Stanfield “both on the bills and in private,” because she did not want any but close friends to know of her new life. Though occasionally she got good parts, mostly there were small parts “as a boy or a young man which is not agreeable to me.” Later she would play every role from Lady Macbeth to the heroine of East Lynne, but her first year in stock was an apprenticeship year. She liked the profession despite its hardships, though she had “little hope of
rising above the level.” Still she could earn a living “without the anxiety … constant detraction, and too frequent mental anguish” of the literary world.584

She ended her letter by writing, “… you do not know how sick I am of the petty notoriety which is not fame, nor how tired I am of exciting that curiosity which is not interest.” Yet she had always provoked just that sort of curiosity herself. Perhaps in her early days she had thought that being a celebrity was an achievement and only later could she see it differently.

In a letter to the theatrical manager William Stuart dated January 6, 1867, Ada confided more details of her new life.585 Stuart had a long, successful career as a theater manager and publicity man, and she had known him since he helped manage Laura Keene’s and Dion Boucicault’s companies in 1856 when Ada was an ingénue. She wrote of her life as “… the focus of dullness, a life without amusement, vanity, hope or ambition, and so not even worth mentioning.” She was “hurried in the morning, hurried at midday and hurried at night” and no wonder. The resident stock company of The New Memphis Theater was typical of others in the provinces such as Albany, New York, or Omaha, Nebraska, or even smaller towns that had a permanent theater. The resident stock company, with almost no rehearsal time, supported noted actors who were touring in their famous roles when they arrived for their scheduled run. In between these star engagements, the company members filled leading roles in the plays themselves. Members of these stock companies might be familiar with as many as 60 different roles. But even though Ada was deprived of the things she had always thought necessary to her well-being, she wrote Stuart she was enjoying marvelous health, “so that my present existence is a combination of the highest health, and the lowest, lowest spirits.”

Some insight into Ada’s feeling that her sensibilities had sunk to a “dull, dead level” can be gained from her comments to Stuart: “If I were in New York now, dining at your table, you might plant me … between the two most uninteresting people on earth, make me eat a goose kept three weeks, and entertain me by abusing the people I like best, and I should not have the spirit to resist.” Her words and tone are humorous, but reveal how much she had always considered herself an aristocratic lady entitled to sophisticated surroundings.

Ada’s letter to William Stuart probably held a forlorn hope he could take her away from her sad circumstances, and find a place for her in his New York company., Since 1864 Stuart had been the manager of the Winter Garden theater in New York City in business partnership with noted actor Edwin Booth. Booth had refurbished the rundown theater, making it a showcase for beautifully staged and acted Shakespearean plays. That successful effort had culminated in Booth’s famous “Hundred Nights Hamlet” that ran from November 26, 1864 to March 22, 1865 with all new scenery, costumes, and actors. But three weeks after it ended, Booth’s actor brother John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln. Public anger rose up against all actors, especially Edwin Booth, though he was innocent of any connection with his brother’s crime. It took until January 1866 for Edwin Booth to affect his return to the Winter Garden.586

There was nothing Ada wanted more than to act in Booth’s company, however small the role. She knew him through mutual friends William and Lizzie Winter. Ada was reading the theater trade papers, and keeping track of the future productions at the Winter Garden. Thus she wrote Stuart, “I felt it was just my luck when I saw you putting up pieces … with a cast I have never seen before.”

Sending him her new name and address, the actress reminded him of the first time she had used the name Agnes Stanfield in 1866, when Stuart had taken her along with a few other cast members to Providence, Rhode Island in a truncated version of The Merry Wives of Windsor after it closed its run in the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The Providence audience was sophisticated enough to see that they were not getting the full production they had been led to expect. Stuart was accused of shortening the performance in order to make it possible for the company to make the last train back to New York in the late evening. That way there was no money spent for a hotel overnight. The Providence audience not only wanted their money back, but turned into such an angry mob, the company hurried to leave town even sooner than planned.587

As embarrassing as that experience had been, Ada thought it looked like fun compared to her situation in Memphis. Perhaps she exaggerated her gloom the better to spur Stuart to find her a role, but Memphis and The New Memphis Theater were not pleasant places to be during her time there.

The City of Memphis had remained intact thanks to surrendering to Union forces immediately in May, 1862, rather than enduring a long, destructive siege on the strategically important Mississippi River as
Vicksburg had. Memphis newspapers were full of advertisements, and its stores were busy the winter of 1866-67. However Memphis was still part of the defeated South experiencing the same problems of disorganization and change, lack of financial stability, and the psychological trauma of people living in the aftermath of war. Memphis had been occupied by Union soldiers, some of them black, and in April, 1866, six months before Ada came, there was a race riot that lasted three days started by a clash between black soldiers and white Memphis police officers.588

Even after Ada arrived to work at the New Memphis Theater in late 1866, the daily papers were full of incidents that showed tensions between blacks and whites. Unease was heightened by the fact that when Tennessee was re-organized when hostilities ended, Memphis lost its political power to a pro-Union faction in eastern Tennessee. The pro-Union faction supported the federal government giving black people equal rights under the law including the right to vote. These plans regarding the future status of black people were very threatening to most of the white people of Memphis, and the atmosphere was ripe for black-white clashes.

Even so, neither the war nor its aftermath had diminished theater attendance in Memphis as people sought distraction from their troubles. Originally opened in 1859, the New Memphis Theater had done well presenting elaborate productions during the Union occupation. After the war, William Thompson returned as its very competent impresario. Thompson not only attracted big stars, but was able to remodel the playhouse with damask covered seats and benches, carpeted floors, ceilings decorated with frescoes, wall niches with statuary, and a bust of Shakespeare looking down on this opulent scene from above the proscenium arch.

But there were unhealthy conditions in this beautiful theater located in a part of Memphis that was low and swampy. In January, 1866, the illustrious English stars Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean complained of the damp dressing-rooms below the theater, where water dripped down the walls. The Keans cut short their run, and hurried to catch the first steamboat that would get them out of the city. There were also yellow fever and cholera epidemics during that time, so Ada may have well been surprised to find herself in good health, when she worked so hard in such unhealthy conditions.

The winter of 1866 and spring of 1867 when Ada was in residence marked the beginning of a bad time for the theater. They had competition for the first time from a rival company at Greenlaw’s Opera House. Though the rival company’s season of plays was shorter, it featured the finest of classical drama with famed players like Adelaide Ristori playing Medea and Lady Macbeth. The competitors also offered variety acts including minstrels, comic vocalists and midgets. The public loved it, and hurried to see acts like Harry McCarthy, the Arkansas Traveller, featuring his own creation, the popular rebel song, “The Bonnie Blue Flag.” He had been hissed off Northern stages but Memphis loved him, joined in singing “Bonnie Blue Flag,” and then hissing “Hail Columbia” and “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This led General Stoneman, the military commissioner of Memphis, to announce that if any more “so called Confederate airs were played, he would intervene.”

All this exciting activity at the Opera House forced Thompson to counter with more elaborate productions that cost more to produce at a time when box office receipts were already going down. Thus he was forced to raise the price of the tickets, and that discouraged attendance even more. Attendance continued to drop even when he presented a cast of 60 in the popular Irish drama Arrah-na-Pogue, a fine Italian opera company, and brought in the whole Mobile, Alabama stock company in support of the famous actor Edwin Forrest. By the end of the season he had to skimp on the final shares paid to members of the company. Ada’s personal share would have been small at best.

One bright spot for Ada in all this was her friendship with Blanche de Bar, niece of Edwin Booth. De Bar had come to play a starring engagement around Christmas, 1866, but illness delayed her appearance until the end of January. The young actress traveled without a female companion, and Ada went to her aid as nurse and companion. Ada enjoyed chatting with de Bar, and described her to Stuart as “handsome, bright, and graceful,” and predicted great things for her acting future – perhaps an appearance with her Uncle Edwin Booth, which would indeed happen in 1869. Ada’s acquaintance with Blanche de Bar’s other uncle, the assassin of the president created another close tie between Ada and de Bar. John Wilkes Booth and his niece had been very close, and had exchanged many letters, some of which brought de Bar under the scrutiny of government authorities after Booth killed Lincoln. Blanche de Bar had been cleared of
charges of conspiring with Booth, but was known as being strongly “secesh.” Ada would feel quite at home with her.

On March 23, 1867, in New York City the Winter Garden Theater and everything in it was destroyed by fire, just when Booth was ready to open his grand revival of *Romeo and Juliet*. Ada immediately wrote Stuart that she had been having “a good cry” over the burning of the theater, and was glad she had not been there all winter “hanging about the theatre,” or she would have thought herself the “Jonah” of the occasion who “had communicated the flavor of my evil stars to it.” And indeed when the Winter Garden burned, parts of Ada’s past went up in flames as well as her future hopes for employment. The building on Broadway opposite Bond Street had been known as Tripler Hall in 1856, when Ada had made her first professional appearance there as an ingénue with Laura Keene’s company. When the theater was remodeled and re-named the Winter Garden, its lobby connected to the lobby of the Lafarge House Hotel where Ada had lived for two years.

Though theater fires were unfortunately common, this one was catastrophic. Edwin Booth lost forty thousand dollars worth of property, including stage scenery and props, and the whole of his professional wardrobe gathered over many years including jewels and stage weapons, and other valuable property. Nevertheless he was determined to start over again and later built a new, larger theater, Booth’s Theater.

Now, in late March, 1867, the winter season ended in Memphis, and Ada scrapped her plans for returning to New York. She knew she must start looking around for a job with another stock company if she hoped to get better roles and better pay than in Memphis. During April, when the stock company from Mobile, Alabama arrived with Edwin Forrest, she made a contact that led to a booking to play juvenile female leads in a new company in Montgomery, Alabama for Fall, 1867. A patron of the arts, Mrs. Hunter, had already raised $4,500 by subscription to bring a first-class company to Montgomery, and Ada would join them there. Having secured that contract Ada was off to Hammonton, New Jersey to spend a pleasant summer visiting Aubrey and the Howlands. There was even time for short trips to New York to visit friends, and to make a last unsuccessful effort to get a booking in the East.

When Ada joined the company in Montgomery in Fall, 1867, the season started out well, but the audiences did not support the company with regular attendance. By November 29, 1867, Mrs. Hunter announced she would have to close the theater unless the actors would take a chance on running it in hopes of earning their board money from box office receipts. The correspondent of the *New York Clipper*, the long-running theatrical newspaper and the *Variety* of its day, condemned the elite of Montgomery for rushing to see a monkey troupe or circus, but being in no hurry to attend live theater. The columnist warned theater people to shun Montgomery. He reported that *Hamlet* had just been presented to a very small audience, and every role was well played, but he was outraged at Agnes Stanfield’s (Ada’s) portrayal of Ophelia, “one of the worse pieces of acting ever witnessed on this or any other stage.” Next the correspondent mocked Stanfield’s performance as Esther in *Caste*. He wrote that all in the company did well, but Stanfield was so bad she almost ruined the whole performance. “I would advise this lady to seek some other occupation as she mistook her calling altogether when she took to the stage.”

Those were fighting words, and Ada fought back. No one but Ada could have fed the information to the *Clipper* editors used in the column “Wants Putting Right on the Record,” December 23, 1867. This unsigned article suggested that the *Clipper* correspondent had maligned Agnes Stanfield out of sheer spite claiming the Montgomery drama reviewers disagreed with the correspondent. The *Montgomery Advertiser* had praised Agnes Stanfield’s performances adding, “She is a charming actress and a valuable acquisition to any company.” The *Sentinel* thought Stanfield’s Ophelia “a gem of purest water.” The *Clipper* concluded saying they were trying to be fair, and thought the actress had been unduly panned by their correspondent.

By the Christmas holidays Ada was home and out of a job. The theatrical world in general was beginning to feel the effects of a tight money market but in Spring 1868, Ada found a place with a stock company that toured through the South starting in Atlanta, and ending up in southeastern Texas in Houston, Galveston, and surrounding small towns. This company’s manager was veteran actor, stage manager, and theater manager, W.H. Crisp, (1820-1874) an old hand on the Southern theater circuit. Born in England, he and his family had come to the United States in the 1840s, and he was soon starring opposite playwright-actress Anna Cora Mowatt in her play *Fashion*, a huge theatrical success in New York in 1845.
In the 1850s, Crisp made a financial success of managing theater companies in the South’s bigger cities, and also sending a troupe to tour smaller venues. While managing the Gaiety Theater in New Orleans from 1856 to 1858, he sent his trouper to Nashville and Memphis, and upon leaving New Orleans he maintained a circuit in Georgia until 1861. After serving the Confederacy as a captain, Crisp successfully returned to his already established touring circuit once the war ended. The new theater territory in Southeastern Texas the Crisp troupe ventured into wasn’t geographically very far from the New Orleans they knew, but the cultural distance was far greater.

Theater in southeastern Texas was more than provincial – it was on the frontier. It had grown slowly during the 1850s, died out when Texans became preoccupied with their role in the Confederacy, and then had come back more strongly than ever as soon as the war ended. Texas, admitted to the Union as a slave state and mostly settled by southerners moving west, had joined the Confederacy but was protected by its distance from the main battles and events of the war. In southeastern Texas, the cotton crops were good and plantations still flourished with former slaves working as sharecroppers. In 1868, when Crisp’s company arrived, most theater activity centered in Galveston, a booming seaport with a fine theater, and Houston, nearby with a smaller theater.

On February 29, 1868, Crisp closed the winter season in Houston for his stock company, and made no plans for its future. Many managers were not planning far ahead at that time – theaters all over the country were closing because of financial woes, though conditions were not yet as bad for the theatrical world as they would become during the financial panic of 1873. Two members of Crisp’s company, G.W. Miller and J. Franklin “Frank” Noyes, came to the rescue, and tried to keep the theater open with the company sharing the box office receipts. By March 8, things were going well enough that Ada and another actress were able to take the customary “benefit” performances that added a share of the box office receipts to their salaries. Crisp and his family were still in town, and they talked with Miller and Noyes about reorganizing the company to tour small towns in surrounding territory.

Together they pared the troupe down to a small group that toured the more remote frontier towns west of Houston like Austin, San Antonio, Brownsville, and New Braunfels by stagecoach and wagons during the spring and summer months of 1868. There were audiences waiting out there for actors willing to put up with the hardships of traveling long distances in the heat, and sometimes performing in makeshift theaters. Even in San Antonio where there was a good theater space, after two nights the troupe had to give it up to another group, and rent the side of a large store for their final performances.

Their small company included Mr. and Mrs. Crisp, their daughter Jessie, Ada, Frank Noyes, and four others who became very close sharing the ups and downs of the trouping life. Ada and Frank Noyes were often cast opposite each other in the Shakespearean productions that the troupe brought to the frontier towns. As Ada played Kate to Frank’s Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*, the sparks of romance may have been kindled. She, blonde and attractive though her beauty was fading, was still the celebrity of the group, and used to being the center of attention. Frank Noyes was handsome, as good in classical roles as in swashbuckling roles, and had authority from his experience as a stage manager and leading man.

Four years younger than Ada, John Franklin Noyes602 was born in New Hampshire around 1838. He made his first appearance after a typical stock company apprenticeship with the National Theatre Company in Boston in the mid 1850s and had come up through the ranks in a theater known for the excellence of its stage, trained by stage manager Thomas Barry, who was reputedly the best in the whole country.

Plays written toward the mid-nineteenth century began including an increasing number of stage directions. During the period of the National Theatre Company’s existence, the stage manager was in charge of casting and rehearsals, and it was up to him to decide how many of the written stage directions for each actor’s movements, groupings on stage, and other “business” would be used. More important the stage manager would suggest details of characterization and interpretation to the actors. A creative stage manager could add much to a performance, and also teach a great deal to the newer company members. By mid-century in many dramatic companies, the stage manager’s duties and creative control were equal to those of a professional theater director plus those of a business manager of today. Frank had both good training and experience as an actor, and ample opportunity to observe early in his career how a good stage manager did his work.
It was in Boston that Frank married his first wife, Gertrude, an actress with the prestigious Boston Museum Theater Company, who is described in Frank Noyes’ *Clipper* obituary as a “western actress of some repute.” The dates of their marriage and subsequent divorce are unknown. By 1862, Frank was a member of the Academy of Music theater company of Cleveland, Ohio known at that time for its superior company, so well organized it had its own professional acting school.

Noyes had successes in his early career, though what happened to him between 1862 and 1867 is unknown. A New Orleans newspaper later wrote that he was well known for performing at the prestigious St. Charles Theater but it is not clear when this was. He probably went on acting during the war, but may have been in the army since more and more men had been called up for service. During the of Fall 1867 he seemed to be off to a good start in Omaha, Nebraska during the theatrical season that took place before he joined Crisp’s company the next year in Texas and met Ada. He was hired for the 1867-68 season as leading man and stage manager of the first resident stock company at the Academy of Music in Omaha, which was then becoming a rapidly growing agricultural town located on the new trans-continental railroad.

Omaha’s leading citizens, hoping to bring some culture to their town, supported the formation of a resident stock company, and hired Frank to establish one. He assembled a company of seasoned actors, including many from manager Ben de Bar’s company in St. Louis. However, despite its name, Omaha’s Academy of Music was not so fine as the elegant structures in Cleveland and Brooklyn. In Omaha the theater was located upstairs in a two-story building with the theater on one side, and a licensed faro game on the other. Besides gambling, the theater’s competition was a “wild and wooly variety show” according to Milton Nobles, an actor with the company in 1867-68.

Despite the efforts of the respectable citizens of Omaha to better the atmosphere of the town, there was a “wild and wooly” group of gamblers and other transients typical of any western frontier town. Street gunfights to settle gambling disputes on Omaha’s board sidewalks were not uncommon. Frank was organizing his acting company and making ready for a new season when on September 8, 1867, he was shot through the hip, and badly injured in a street fight. The *Clipper*’s correspondent hastened to say that Frank had been an innocent bystander. Surgery failed to extract the bullet, and he was not able to stay on as manager in Omaha.

A few months later he recovered enough to work in New Orleans at the St. Charles Theater, where he had previously made successful appearances. He was supporting popular star Lotta Crabtree in her hit *The Female Detective* on November 29, when he made a misstep in a chase scene and fell 16 feet, striking his head, and fracturing his skull. A good trouper, he tried to finish the scene even while bleeding from the nose and mouth. The audience cheered him on, but sympathetic Lotta rang down the curtain. He was unable to continue that role. Rumors and questions circulated about the incident. Was his balance faulty because of his hip injury – or was he drunk? Was he an innocent victim of the street fight in Omaha, or was the fight the result of Noyes being a gambler who settled disputes with a gun?

Later Marie Howland came to know Frank Noyes well and described him as having “the usual temperament and faults of the artist,” and also as being a “good fellow,” with great personal charm. She wrote this description after both Ada and Frank were dead, and perhaps Marie would not speak ill of the dead, and especially of someone who had married her dearest friend and was like family to her. However, the phrase “temperament and faults of the artist” does carry some negative connotations.

Ada and Frank married in Houston, Texas, September 9, 1868, and they planned to spend their summers with Aubrey and the Howlands in Hammonton, New Jersey and winters touring small towns or acting in resident companies. And so Agnes Stanfield, formerly Ada Clare, born Ada Agnes McElhenney, took a husband and a new name, Ada Noyes, in both her private life and onstage.

No correspondence survives that reveals what either Ada or Frank thought about their marrying. One imagines that sexual attraction and a desire for companionship certainly entered into it. Considering certain facts about Ada at this time can produce some conjecture for other motives. At 34 years old Ada had probably become tired of going it alone away from the emotional support of her closest friends. Furthermore, her physical attractions and the public’s memories of her as a celebrity were both fading fast. Despite the reluctance to be known as Ada Clare that she expressed to Charles Warren Stoddard when she first went to Memphis, she must have realized that both her past notoriety as Ada Clare and her beauty were inducements for managers to hire her to work as an actress. She certainly had no long, successful
acting career to recommend her. And she did want to earn her living as an actress. By marrying Frank, a desirable leading man and an experienced stage manager, Ada became a partner in a very marketable package deal on the stock company circuit. Many actor-managers had actress wives, who played leading roles. By marrying Frank, Ada assured herself of companionship, job security with better roles than she had before, and hopefully a husband who could provide for her and Aubrey if she couldn’t work.

Perhaps most important, Frank would be a father for Aubrey, and immediately provided a legitimate last name for the child. When Ada had gone on the road as Agnes Stanfield, Aubrey had been doubly deserted – he had no visible father or mother, and he alone still carried Ada’s invented last name, Clare. He was now nine years old, in regular attendance at school, and surrounded by playmates in the small, inbred community of Hammonton, New Jersey whose parents may have raised the issue of Aubrey’s parentage. Marie Howland was a more nurturing person than Ada could ever be, but she could not possibly shield Aubrey from all unpleasantness and his own insecurities around the issues of his parentage, nor make up for his mother’s absence most of the year.

And Aubrey had displayed signs of being insecure. Marie’s niece, Affie Chesley Brown, who also lived with the Howlands at that time, remembered Aubrey doing destructive things like driving nails into the piano, and other things “just as annoying,” though she herself did not think he was “vicious.” She remembered Ada, visiting in summers, as a “beautiful woman with dark blue eyes” whose beauty “was starting to fade, more or less.”

Ada, in marrying at last, attained a certain respectability for herself as well as her child, and a permanent partner in real life as well as on the stage. And perhaps all of these good reasons to be married weighed even more heavily with Ada because her old friend Adah Isaacs Menken died in Paris, August 10, 1868, just a month before Ada’s marriage. She and Ada had had so much in common as New Women from the South, both actresses and writers. Though The Menken had enjoyed enormous financial success on the stage, she had run through several marriages, and had two children who barely survived birth, much to her sorrow. And what had it all come to? Ada, at least, was raising a son, and marrying would provide some future stability for herself and Aubrey, even if she died young as so many of her friends had.

What would Frank gain from this marriage? Since Ada consistently charmed the vast majority of all the men she ever met, Frank was probably just as fascinated as any of them had been. They had already shared the same hard life as trouping players, and he too may have seen the opportunity for a good stage partnership. Also, by that time Ada seems to have gotten her finances into better shape, and she may have offered to share expenses with Frank and his partner Miller when they were ready to start a permanent company in Bryan City, Texas later in the Fall season of 1868. Frank probably dreamed of doing what many stage managers did – leasing a theater permanently for his own resident stock company with visiting stars attracting the audiences to make up a profitable season.

The company with Crisp had had some success there during a hot spring and summer of 1868. But Bryan City had just built a new theater building, and was potentially lucrative surrounded as it was by old established cotton plantations. The new theater was nicely fitted up and held 500 people. It was also located near cities like Houston and Galveston where Ada and Frank might get other work if the Bryan City theater did not do well. Frank stayed with the company all summer, but Ada went home, surely knowing by then that she and Frank would marry. When she returned they were married September 9, 1868, in Houston, and immediately went to Bryan City where Frank announced the new season with himself as stage manager and leading man and his wife, Ada Noyes as leading lady. He promised the Bryan City audiences lots of exciting new plays to get them interested.

Business was not very brisk in September, but Frank and Ada played The Taming of the Shrew, and someone named Billy Wallace appeared who satirized candidates’ “stump speeches” in the national election only a few months away. Then bad weather and the defection of their partner Miller, who left to work as a cotton broker, caused a break in the season.

But Frank and Ada persevered, rounded up some more actors, and for about two months gave regular performances ranging from The Golden Farmer to Romeo and Juliet; from Ten Nights in a Bar-Room to Othello. Audiences seemed to love Ada playing her favorite Shakespearean roles. No more bit parts for Mrs. Noyes! Perhaps being a happy newlywed kindled new energy, and maybe some of Frank’s talent rubbed off on her. With his experience as a stage manager, he would have been able to coach her to give the best possible
performances. Her benefit November 21, though her second in two months, was the best house of the season. Noyes had taken his benefit early in November, and, having made enough to re-coup their original investment in Bryan City, they left in December when Henry Greenwall offered them work in his stock company in Houston and Galveston.

Having had their fill of the responsibilities of managing their own theater they were happy to return to the theaters of the Greenwalls. The theater in Galveston and its Houston satellite was the best of provincial theater in a wide area of the West, and would put them in a better position for the future.

The season of 1868-1869 was the second that the Greenwalls managed the Galveston and Houston theaters. Though financial times elsewhere had taken their toll of theater, the leading businessmen of Galveston strongly supported efforts to keep open their “respectable and moral place of amusement,” and were always tendering complimentary benefit performances to help the theater financially. The stock company’s repertory was very versatile but in Fall 1868, it was “sensation” dramas like Augustin Daly’s Under the Gaslight and The Streets of New York, popular plays nationwide, that packed the house. During the summer the Greenwalls had installed stage machinery that made possible sudden ascents and descents that added even more excitement to the climactic moments of these plays.

However there was one downside to this community support—since the same people attended the theater often, there were no long runs—there had to be a constantly changing bill to hold their interest. By winter, stars on tour arrived, usually for a week’s run. They played the leads in plays that had made them famous, and the stock company hurriedly rehearsed by day to support them in the evenings. Ada and Frank, suddenly thrust into this busy scene, did well and audiences liked them.

When they first arrived, the Galveston press welcomed Ada as a celebrity: “… a woman famous in the world of literature, and author of Only A Woman’s Heart.” The journalist who wrote about her in Flake’s Press on February 18, 1869 had known Ada years ago at Pfaff’s, and described her reign over “brilliant Bohemians of the press with a ‘love of a bonnet’ for a crown, and a lead pencil for a scepter.” But time flies—the journalist said it was more years than either he or Ada cared to remember when Ada’s beauty had been the envy of many other beauties. He also praised Frank as a man of “fine presence and an excellent actor.”

Their debut opened that evening with Henry Chanfrau, the star, in the title role of Tom Taylor’s Ticket Of Leave Man, a current, much performed melodrama about a criminal on parole trying to “go straight” who is entrapped and then exploited, but finally wins out. The play was very well received; Ada got good reviews in her comic role as Emily St. Evremond, a cockney actress with social pretensions, and even got to sing. The drama critic agreed that Mr. and Mrs. Noyes were “valuable acquisitions” for the season.

Ada and Frank finished out the rest of the season with Ada playing mostly supporting roles while Frank played two leading roles and received outstanding reviews. As Romeo in Romeo and Juliet he prompted the reviewer’s unqualified praise for a performance showing “careful study and judicious conception” of the Shakespearean role. He also won raves playing the title role of a play about the Irish patriot Robert Emmett. Ada garnered her best review as a cast member of a “serio-comic burletta” Ogden’s Adventures With A Polish Princess—It was full of “local hits” satirizing Galveston, and the audience loved the knockabout farce.

It was just as well that the season was drawing to a close, because Ada was now pregnant. Ada and Frank returned to Hammonton to stay with the Howlands; as Ada awaited the birth of their baby in July, Frank commuted to New York and wherever else he could get roles. There is no way of knowing how Aubrey first responded to his stepfather Frank, who by all accounts was a charming, friendly man. But in the long run, Aubrey must have become very attached to him. When Aubrey grew up, he became an actor, probably because of Frank’s influence and example as well as Ada’s. While Ada had always loved the stage, Frank was a lifelong professional actor-manager. And when Aubrey married his childhood playmate, Mabel Moulton, he named their son, born in 1881, after his stepfather.

Ada and Frank’s daughter was born in Hammonton, New Jersey in mid-July, 1869 around the time of Ada’s 35th birthday. They named her “Agnes,” Ada’s middle name, and nicknamed her “Nessie.” Sadly, the baby did not thrive, and she died five weeks later on August 21, 1869. Like the burials in the family graveyard on the plantation in Ada’s youth, she was buried on the grounds of the Howlands’ farm at Ada’s
request. The Howlands seemed to be settled for good, and just as Ada entrusted her son’s care to her friends that were like family, she counted on them to care for her daughter’s grave. She and Frank planned to make their living on the stage, and had to travel wherever they could find work.

Ada grieved for her daughter, and there was more grief to come. News of Louis Moreau Gottschalk’s death came in December, 1869, and she must have reacted strongly. She had spent so much of her life embittered over the loss of his love, and perhaps had finally resolved her feelings. Now he was gone for good. Gottschalk’s death in Rio de Janeiro ended his long odyssey in South America following the 1865 California scandal when he left the United States never to return.617

Gottschalk had been triumphant concertizing in Peru, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. In South America he was financially successful and idolized by his audiences. At the age of forty he finally had achieved some financial security for himself, after so many years of supporting his brothers and sisters. But he did hope to return to his native land someday. After the scandal died down and he was offered work in the United States in 1869 he began to make plans to return home. But before returning, he decided to concertize in Brazil where he was tremendously successful conducting and playing as soloist in Rio de Janeiro, though he had to overcome increasing periods of illness. Ultimately he was not able to survive what was probably appendicitis with complications of peritonitis, and he collapsed at the piano during a concert after playing a composition called Morte. His death came soon after on December 9, 1869.

He was buried in Rio de Janeiro immediately, and there were legal complications when his family tried to retrieve his possessions and return his body to the United States for burial. It was a year before his family aided by diplomats was able to return his body to the United States, though many of his important possessions were lost. His funeral and burial took place October 3, 1870,618 with great pomp and ceremony. The next month, Ada went to her lawyers, her old friends the Mitchells, and made a new will. The state of her own health, the death of her baby daughter, the illnesses and deaths of many of her friends including Gottschalk may have all been factors that motivated her to change her will into what would be its final form.619

Her new will, couched in legal language, reflected both her married state, and efforts to provide for the future of Aubrey and whatever children might yet be born. Her estate, principally a $25,000 mortgage bond was to be sold, and one third was left to Frank, as well as all their furniture, and her books and jewelry. The rest would go to Aubrey and any other child that survived. If Frank and the children did not survive Ada, then after her death her heirs would be Marie and Edward Howland, William and Lizzie Winter, and Zavarr Wilmshurst. She never forgot the loyalty and kindness of her friends.

Summer at the Howlands’ was the time and place where Ada could truly regroup her forces. When she and Frank returned there for the summer of 1871, Hammonton was growing, the Howlands’ Casa Tonti truck farm was prospering, and Marie Howland had found a place to act on her feminist and humanitarian concerns by founding a local woman’s club and writing the “Woman’s Department” column in the South Jersey Republican. The local club was in touch with women’s clubs elsewhere, and in late Spring 1871, Marie went to New York for a women’s convention led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony at Apollo Hall on Broadway.

Marie returned with a plan for raising money for the club to spend on local projects, one of which was helping abused children. Ada, a club member herself, and Frank would put on plays at the local hall to raise money to buy a “knitting machine that knits 20,000 stitches a minute to make stockings, shawls, bedspreads, and underdrawers” for the club to sell to raise money. The local dry-goods store agreed to take their items for sale.620

The South Jersey Republican announced on June 3 that Mr. and Mrs. Noyes would begin rehearsals shortly for two performances at Union Hall, and that since the people of Hammonton “have never witnessed in this town a performance by professional actors, we doubt not they will be impatient for this rare treat.” The article noted that Mrs. Noyes had “won golden applause in the South and West before marrying the famous tragedian Mr. Noyes.”621 Ada and Frank offered to give local amateur actors theater training while the amateurs took supporting roles in the production. The two of them encouraged the founding of a local drama club, and worked with the group when they returned for the next two summers.

On June 16 and 20, Union Hall was filled with Hammonton residents who enjoyed East Lynne, Woman, and A Lesson for Husbands. When Marie wrote up the performances for her column, she felt it necessary to
apologize for some of Ada’s performances. She wrote: “Mrs. Noyes is a lady of culture and rare refinement … not used to the inadequate stage” of Union Hall where she “was not at her best.” But Marie thought Ada excellent as Lady Isabel in *East Lynne* and thought Frank “almost too charming in playing questionable characters” – perhaps she was joking when she said she was afraid he might be a bad influence. 623

The performances raised $40, Marie got her knitting machine, and Ada and Frank went off to New York to look into bookings for next season.

Ada and Frank were now able to get the best booking they had ever had – Frank would be stage manager and leading actor, and she the leading actress of the Richmond, Virginia theater company for the Fall and Winter season of 1871-1872. The owner of the Richmond Theater, home to the stock company, was Mrs. Powell, who spent most of the year in New York and thus needed an extremely competent manager. Richmond, one of the largest cities in the South, was well recovered from the Civil War. It had one of the oldest theater companies in the United States with a distinguished history of continuous performances. The theater had thrived even more during the Civil War when Richmond was the Confederate capitol. The Richmond Theater was elegant with 1800 seats and 8 private boxes. It had recently been refurbished with a new drop curtain and carpets “fine and showy enough for a palace.” Some of the most famous players in American theater history had played there. Yet perhaps this opportunity came too late for Ada.

There are statements from an observer in Richmond that Ada was by this time “sadly wrecked,” that “sickness and domestic difficulties had impaired her physical gifts,” and that she worked awfully hard to be “painstaking and correct,” but never really pleased the “general public.” 625 “Domestic difficulties” could have meant quarrels between Ada and Frank, or that perhaps Ada suffered repeated pregnancies and miscarriages, or even both. Certainly Frank’s heavy responsibilities running the Richmond Theater Company and acting left him little personal time to be emotionally supportive. At any rate they both worked terribly hard, and both more than fulfilled their commitments for the season in Richmond.

Under Frank’s management during the winter season 1871-72, the theater broke two records for most prosperous weeks. The theater did the largest business ever done by Mrs. Powell’s stock company during Frank Chanfrau’s two week engagement, when he did his star vehicle, *Kit, the Arkansas Traveler*, January 17, 1872. Then the performances of Madame Fanny Janauschek,627 one of the most famous tragic actresses of her day, drew the largest week’s attendance in the history of any Richmond theater up until that time during her run in mid-February, 1872. Both Chanfrau and Janauschek had appeared successfully before, but never to such large sold-out audiences. Everyone agreed the company had supported the actors unusually well. Near the end of the season when Frank was due for his benefit performance, the *Richmond Whig*’s drama reviewer noted on February 16, 1872: “No day laborer has worked harder than Mr. Noyes during the season to make the dramatic entertainments … acceptable to the public.”

Frank acted in leading roles, directed rehearsals, and kept an eye on box office receipts, and also supervised handling of the scenery, props, and costume crews plus making sure the machinery was working for the special effects in the “sensation” scenes in the melodramas. He also had to do on-the-spot training of crew members to take small acting parts when necessary. Ada’s role was as actress. She had the honor of opening the season by delivering a flowery speech written by a prominent Richmond attorney, September 25, 1871. She then appeared in the lead role of Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons*, the company’s first offering. The audience was impressed, and the theater columnist of the *Richmond Enquirer* was even more interested. His reviews over the season show he knew something about drama, and he took special note of Mr. and Mrs. Noyes. He attended a rehearsal even before the season started to familiarize himself with the whole company, and wrote about Ada: “Mrs. Noyes … is a fine actress and a handsome woman … competent for the trying position of leading lady in a regular company.”

He thought the company was at some disadvantage because none of them had ever appeared in Richmond before. But they went on to please the audience with old favorites like *East Lynne and Caste* which also allowed Ada to play familiar leading roles. However the audience, though appreciative could be very noisy. The *Enquirer* correspondent suggested perhaps the police should step in to keep better order.

By October the first of the touring stars, Lillie Eldridge, appeared at the theater and it was she, not Ada, who played Kate to Frank’s Petruchcio in *Taming of the Shrew*. The company supported her for a week,
and then had a rest when another actress appeared with her own troupe. The Clipper correspondent thought the audience was gradually warming up to the resident troupe, and particularly appreciated Frank’s acting. At any rate he thought the company’s costumes were more lavish than any ever seen on that stage, and Ada’s the most beautiful of all.

In between visits by stars, Ada and Frank and the company added another sensation drama, The Streets of New York, another crowd pleaser that the company knew well enough to perform without too much rehearsal. They were competing with other attractions in town like circuses, magicians, clog dancers, Negro minstrels, and other entertainment artists. One night they even had to compete with an exciting election night torchlight parade. In early November audiences were swelled by State Fair visitors. Ada performed as Mariana in Don Caesar de Bazan (another popular play forgotten today) and the Enquirer’s reviewer thought her graceful, but noted “her delivery is painfully monotonous. She pitches her voice too high, and then neither falls nor rises, and gives to the most commonplace dialogue the measured grace of the most elegant verse.” He suggested that if she could learn more variety in her voice and facial expression, “she would be a very effective actress.” Perhaps she was depressed, or just worn out trying to keep up. She may have had very little time to study this new role, and could barely remember her lines much less think much about what those lines meant. However, criticisms of Ada’s weak or “monotonous” voice followed her throughout her acting career.

The Enquirer’s reviewer wrote favorably of later performances, and tried to make up for times he had “criticized both Mr. and Mrs. Noyes a little roughly. They are leading artists, and therefore legitimate subjects of criticism.” He went overboard when Ada deserved praise: he enjoyed Ada as the lead in Fancbon so much, he had seen it twice. He could only praise “her rendition of a difficult role,” and commented that the famous star Maggie Mitchell had not only become famous repeating that role, but it was so difficult, she had “made it the study of her life.” Ada still could not match Mitchell, but in “correctness of conception” and “real pathos,” he thought Ada came close. High praise indeed, and knowing Ada, she must have spoken up when the Enquirer criticized Frank and Ada Noyes “a little roughly.”

After seeing Ada throughout the whole season he commented that Ada was her best with “rollicksome, dashing, tom-boyish” characters, and “her forte lies in that line rather than in tragedy or drama.” During her intermittent acting career. Ada had always received her best reviews for doing that type of role.

The season continued with visiting stars, and the usual fare. On January 1, 1872, Edwin Adams appeared in Hamlet which the Clipper correspondent had to admit “rather over-taxed the strength of the company.” No wonder that Frank decided the next offering Richard III would be played on horseback. If the audience was bored with the actors struggling with long Shakespearean speeches, a few good battle scenes with real horses would rouse them!

The audience turned out to see well-known stars like Henry Chanfrau who started his run with the same Ticket of Leave Man in which Ada and Frank had supported him in Texas. Then he did Kit, the Arkansas Traveller with a “realistic portrayal” of the West including Frank excelling in a “bar-room fight with bowie knives and six-shooters” followed by the burning of the riverboat setting at the end of the play -- all guaranteed to draw a large audience. This was the play that produced the largest box-office receipts earned by the Powell’s company.

On February 12, 1872, Ada was taken severely ill so suddenly, her part had to be read by a substitute when she could not appear. She was not onstage again until February 22, and even then the Enquirer reported her to be “evidently suffering.” The Clipper thought her courageous to appear, “but recently recovered from serious illness,” and playing her role “with energy and zeal deserving commendation.”

We do not know exactly what went on behind the scenes of that Richmond season, but toward the end of the season Ada certainly was having health problems. There is no way of finding out what the “domestic difficulties” were, but they impressed the Enquirer correspondent enough to mention them two years later when he wrote her obituary after her death March 4, 1874. Perhaps after all it stemmed from Frank neglecting Ada for the simple reason that he had such heavy responsibilities, he had no time for her at all even when she was ill. Perhaps Ada did not have the skill or stamina to be leading lady in a stock company and keep up with supporting roles with the visiting stars. And after Richmond, the worst was yet to come.
CHAPTER 13:
“BRIGHTNESS FALLS FROM THE AIR,
QUEENS HAVE DIED YOUNG AND FAIR”

The reports of the events of the last year of Ada’s life from 1873 to 1874 are as full of contradictions as her own personality had always been, and there is almost nothing left of Ada’s writing telling her own side of the story. First of all she was reported as being ill and poor. She may have been ill at times, and she and her husband may have been living frugally, but we know she was not impoverished because she left an estate of $25,000 when she died March 4, 1874.

Secondly though we know of her estrangement from her immediate family in the South after 1859, in spring of 1873 her cousin Paul Hamilton Hayne appeared in New York to take care of literary business and to convince Ada to return to the South and move in with his family. This was later remembered by his son, William Hayne. Third, we know she was married to Frank Noyes, but at the time of the Hayne visit she was reported by Elizabeth Stoddard to be living in a “house of assignation,” and working as a prostitute. Stoddard’s depiction was a far cry from that of the Ada who was a devoted wife and a member of the Women’s Club of Hammonton, New Jersey remembered by her friend, Marie Howland. It is necessary to look at what the two sources of all this had to say about it, and then examine their credibility.

Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard, novelist and short story writer, was the wife of Richard Henry Stoddard, poet and essayist, an old friend of Paul Hamilton Hayne. Before the war they had corresponded and Hayne had visited them, and after the war they resumed their personal and literary friendships. Two fragments of letters Elizabeth Barstow Stoddard wrote to her friend William Winter in March, 1873, tell much about Hayne’s visit to New York, and his efforts to help Ada. She subsequently wrote William and Lizzie Winter suggesting they help Ada.

Describing Hayne’s recent visit to New York, Elizabeth Stoddard wrote the Winters: “One night Hayne sent Dick a distracted note asking for money…afterward Hayne explained to Dick that he had given all to Ada… Dick had $10 only which he sent him.” The Stoddards always had money problems – so did Hayne and his family, then living in a dilapidated dwelling near Augusta, Georgia. After Hayne took all available cash, Richard Stoddard next had to arrange free passage home for Hayne and his teen-age son William who had accompanied Hayne on the New York visit. Furthermore, as Elizabeth Stoddard confided in Winter, Hayne did not even mention the Stoddards’ generosity in his latest letter to Richard Stoddard.

Several days later Mrs. Stoddard sent the Winters another note to “add a more explicit word regarding Ada Clare” – to prove that her remarks were not just malicious gossip, but were prompted by concern. Hayne had confided in the Stoddards that Ada was overwhelmed by troubles, and one of his objects in coming North was to persuade Ada to go home with him. “He found her in a house of assignation, so poor that he gave all the money he had to her – he also said he had an altercation with the man who was at present with her.”

Elizabeth Stoddard thought the Winters would want to help Ada since they were such good friends of hers. Elizabeth’s words painted the picture of Ada’s present situation: “Alone, poor, friendless, past youth, no attraction compelled, and choosing to be a prostitute.” That was the way Elizabeth Stoddard saw it. Paul, who kept voluminous records of everything, did not write to the Stoddards, or ever write about seeing Ada in New York in 1873.

However, William Hayne, Paul’s son, remembered that 1873 visit. He wrote about it in a February 16, 1897 letter in answer to Marie Howland’s letter requesting his permission for Marie to do a biography of Ada. He described their visit, and how his father Paul Hayne tried to persuade her to return South to make her home with them, but that she would not leave New York.
William Hayne tried to discourage Marie from writing Ada’s biography. William felt that he should now be the family spokesman since his father, Paul; mother, Minna; and Grandmother Emily Hayne, plus Ada’s brother Eugene were all dead. He felt that Ada had led a scandalous life that was very hurtful to her family, so it was better to keep the facts of her life out of the public eye now that Ada was dead. He did express gratitude for Marie’s guardianship of Ada’s grave.

William wrote Marie that of Ada’s immediate family in 1897, there only survived Ada’s married sister Susan McElhenney Roser, who had years ago corresponded with Ada’s Aunt Emily Hayne (William’s grandmother). William thought Susan Roser was still living in New York, but did not know how to get in touch with her.

In 1873, Susan Roser, Ada’s sister was living in New York, was most likely to be the person who wrote the family from New York about Ada’s troubles and thus motivated Paul’s rescue mission. Ada’s troubles must have been dreadful to prompt her sister to write to her impoverished kinsman in the South to go North to take Ada home. Perhaps Susan had not the resources to help Ada, and thought at least Paul Hayne could take Ada away from New York completely. It is probable that Ada’s marriage was in trouble. If her husband Frank Noyes was the “man who was with her” when Paul and William Hayne visited, Paul may have gotten in a fight with Ada’s husband because Frank was abusing Ada, or Paul felt he had not done right by Ada in some way. If the man was not Frank Noyes, obviously Paul felt Ada still needed his immediate intervention.

As for Ada “choosing to be a prostitute,” this seems unlikely. Business conditions in the U.S.A. worsened after 1872, and the theater was affected badly, as usual, but Ada had a $25,000 bond in the bank. She could have used some of that money for living expenses. Ada was already using some of that money to send Aubrey to a private boarding school in Westchester County. What is more likely is that she and Frank were saving money by living in a lower-priced hotel frequented by theater people, and “respectable” people like Elizabeth Stoddard and Paul Hayne still thought of an actress, especially one living in a theatrical hotel, as no better than a prostitute.

More importantly, Elizabeth Stoddard was a spiteful person. Her close friend Edmund C. Stedman, considered her “a woman of genius” who “loves her friends, but is a good hater, also, and I wouldn’t offend her for anything.” Certainly her talent was mostly unrecognized. Her husband’s mediocre writing got more attention than hers, though never much money, and the Stoddards barely scraped by. Whatever the cause of her feelings, it does not justify the destruction her ill-chosen words often caused.

For example, Elizabeth Stoddard was a close friend of Edwin Booth’s first wife Mary. As Mary Booth lay dying of tuberculosis in Boston in 1863, her family and friends tried to shield her from any stress. But Elizabeth Stoddard wrote Mary in detail of Edwin Booth’s worsening alcoholism as he struggled to sustain his acting career on the New York stage, at a time when he was emotionally and financially pressured. It may have been “the straw that broke the camel’s back” – Mary died shortly after. So much for Elizabeth Stoddard’s efforts to convince the Winters she sincerely wanted to help Ada, and was not just gossiping about her.

From the 1870s on, Ada’s life seemed to go downhill – her emotional health, her physical health, her married life, her work life – there were too many indications to ignore, whether or not everyone had the facts right. Theater work was hard to find when the “Panic of 1873,” brought on by railroad speculation and corrupt business schemes, ushered in a three-year period during which at least 10,000 businesses failed, which was disastrous for theater. Ada and Frank had a hard time getting bookings. By the end of 1873, Ada was listed in the Clipper’s mailbox section used frequently by players to contact those offering future bookings. An item here and there toward the end of 1873 shows her taking temporary engagements in the Albany and Rochester area not too far from New York by train. Frank played roles here and there too, but never as a member of a permanent company. By 1874, Ada and Frank lived in a boardinghouse on Bleecker Street in Manhattan, which by then had become highly commercialized and much shabbier as a residential area. They joined Aubrey when he had school holidays, to be with the Howlands at their farm “Casa Tonti” in Hammonton, New Jersey.

And then January 30, 1874, a brief item in the New York Times mentioned that Mrs. Ada Noyes had been severely bitten on the face by a pet dog she was playing with at Sanford’s Theatrical Agency. Dr. Samuel Elliott had immediately attended to the wound and expected it to heal quickly. He was optimistic
Ada would not develop rabies, a death sentence in the era before development of the preventive vaccine. Ada had always loved dogs, and yet, Marie Howland remembered that she had always had a morbid fear of rabies.

There was nothing unusual about Ada’s fear: she shared it with multitudes. The disease in man, its connection to the bite of a rabid dog, and its fatal ending in hideous suffering, had been known since 2300 B.C.644 There would be no successful treatment until Louis Pasteur, French scientist, developed and successfully used a vaccine in 1885. In 1872, English scientist George Fleming wrote, “It is even doubted whether any of the many diseases which afflict humanity, and are a source of dread, either because of their painfulness, their mortality, or the circumstances attending their advent and progress, can equal rabies in the terror it inspires.”645

On February 15, 1874, Ada’s old acquaintance from Pfaff’s, catty, much-married Mary Hewins Burnham Fiske mentioned Ada’s accident in her theatrical news column in the *St. Louis Republican* under her byline “M.H.B.” By 1874, Mary Hewins Burnham had acquired another husband, noted drama critic Stephen Fiske following some scandalous circumstances.646 Perhaps that is why she wrote so spitefully about others, attempting to divert attention from herself. Even if the painful dog bites and scars could not daunt Ada’s spirits, M.H.B. intended to do just that. Under the headline “Sad Fate of the Queen,” she said that Ada Clare, former beauty and Queen of Bohemia, had been bitten by a dog, and her face was horribly disfigured for life. No matter: her stage career, never great, was over anyhow — she had been “out of an engagement” for a long time, and living in “perfect oblivion.” Furthermore she mentioned Ada’s husband Frank Noyes as someone who had made little “noise” with his theatrical career.

She then mentioned everyone’s surprise that Ada was still alive when so many of her friends had already turned in a “mortuary” performance. She told the sad story of how most of Ada’s kingdom of Bohemians were dead: among them Ned Wilkins and Getty Gay in 1861; then Fitz-James O’Brien dead from a war wound; and after the war, George Arnold in 1866, next Artemus Ward in London, and then Adah Isaacs Menken in Paris by 1868. M.H.B. became sentimental recalling the old days – the fun at Pfaff’s and the parties in Ned Wilkins’ rooms on Amity Street where “more bright things were said in an hour … than would give a man a reputation for wit and carry him down into the next generation as a star” – after all, even hard-bitten M.H.B. had been one of them, and shared in the fun.

Ada didn’t let those words go by without an answer. Her reply dated February 20, 1874, appeared in the *St. Louis Republican*. They would be the last words she would ever write, and they were full of her former fighting spirit, yet they reveal how terribly important her beauty was to her self-image and self respect. She insisted that the article about her “was untrue in every respect,” except for the fact she had been bitten by a dog, but “the wounds were such as to endanger life, rather than looks.” She insisted that her physical strength and “skillful surgery” had aided in her swift recovery, and she was intent on proving she could still have a stage career. She even enclosed a note from her doctor saying the wound had healed leaving no disfiguring scars.

Ada wrote that her anger over the report her looks had been ruined was not from “personal vanity,” but with an eye to “future loaves and fishes.” However, though Ada was already working again with Lucille Western’s company in upstate New York, no one would hire her in the future with reports that her face was actually disfigured. How could she talk about her future stage career when, in those days, being bitten by a rabid dog was a death sentence? Her letter was published in the *St. Louis Republican*, March 1, 1874: four days later newspapers all over the country published a bulletin from New York announcing the March 4 death of Ada Agnes Noyes from hydrophobia, the name for rabies in humans. Reports of the results of a coroner’s jury, and Ada’s obituaries appeared in many New York city and state newspapers all over the country as well as states and cities ranging from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, as well as Detroit, Baltimore, Charleston, New Orleans, and St. Louis. Her old friend William Winter647 wrote her obituary in the *New York Tribune*, and was a member of the coroner’s jury. The *Clipper’s* obituary March 14, 1874 is the longest, and has the most accurate and complete biographical facts. Ada Clare was a celebrity in her own day.

Newspaper accounts and even the report of the coroner’s jury of Ada’s last days differ, and are full of factual errors. Her husband Frank’s account of Ada’s last days and dying told to Marie Howland648 probably give us as many details as we will ever know. Actually, though there was some doubt whether the
dog that bit Ada was rabid, and Frank thought at the very end doctors had hastened Ada's death by over-
medicating her, it so happens that Ada's illness and death present a classic case of one type of rabies,
“furious” or “agitated” rabies.

Back on January 30, 1874, after a little black and tan terrier, (later said by its owner to be ill and fretful)
had bitten Ada’s nose through to the cartilage, and also bitten her above the lip and under the left eye, she
pressed her handkerchief to the wound, and hurried to the nearby office of her doctor, Dr. Samuel Elliott.
He cleansed the wound, cauterized it and made stitches wherever necessary. After the wound healed,
showing just a slight scar, Ada went up to Auburn and Rochester, New York to take a temporary role
replacing someone in Lucille Western’s company of East Lynne.

On January 31, 1874 after treating Ada, Dr. Elliott had gone to look at the dog that bit her, and
arranged for a dog handler to take the dog away for observation. The dog’s owner believed the dog was
sick, but not rabid. The dog did die the day after biting Ada, but also had bitten his handler, and another
person who did not sustain ill effects at that time. The examination of the dog’s stomach after death
revealed that he had chewed up a lot of carpeting, something that rabid dogs as well as some normal dogs
that are badly trained may do. It was only later that scientists learned how to find traces of rabies in the
brain of a rabid animal during an autopsy.

In February, while Ada joined the cast of East Lynne in upstate New York, Frank remained in New
York. On March 3, he received a telegram that Ada was ill, asking him to meet the train bringing her home.
He met her at Grand Central Depot with a carriage, and took her home to Bleecker Street where Dr. Elliott
was waiting. She was in pain, and “a terrible state of exaltation – raving, apparently from terror at the way
she had been treated.” Marie and Frank checked later but never found out if the story Ada told them was
true – Frank thought she had gone out of her mind.

Ada’s story follows, and her wild behavior that provoked fear in others is consistent with behavior that
may occur in a victim of rabies at the onset of the acute phase of the illness after a period of incubation. Ada
was stricken onstage, March 2, in Rochester, and she told Frank that there was a panic in the theater,
and she was helpless among super-excited people who were afraid Ada would attack them. Among the
symptoms of the onset described in medical literature are “a feeling of apprehension … an excess of saliva
in the mouth so that the patient may be constantly spitting; intermittent mental derangement which may be
associated with periods of mania” among others. This would explain why, as she said, she was taken to
the police station between two policemen with drawn pistols, and locked in a special cell for ladies. No one
immediately understood what was happening to her: probably no one knew about the dog bite.

There she remembered suffering the most awful agony of terror and sense of abandonment. She cried
aloud for help, and heard a lady’s voice outside begging the guards to let her go to Ada and help her. Ada
screamed for the guards to let the woman in. When they did, Ada threw herself into the woman’s arms, and
was quieted. Ada did not recognize the woman, who may have been one of the actresses from her troupe.

The Clipper reporting on Ada’s death said she had been taken ill on stage Monday evening, March 2, in
Rochester and the manager of the East Lynne troupe had arranged for her to be taken to her lodgings, and
then arranged the next day for her to return to New York with an attendant, and wired Frank she would be
there that evening.

However Ada said it was the kind lady who visited her in jail, put her on the train with an attendant,
and wired Frank. After Dr. Elliott saw Ada’s condition, he called in two specialists. Frank was not
altogether happy with their treatment because he noticed that among the drugs the doctors gave her, were
“the calabar bean and chloroform,” particularly strong opiates. He thought since Ada’s health was not good
even before the dog bite, she was too weak to tolerate such strong medicine. When Frank later compared
notes with Marie and Edward Howland, they all felt Ada’s extreme excitement and terror exhausted what
little strength she had. They probably did not know that the extreme excitement and terror were also
neurological manifestations of the last stages of the disease.

In Frank’s description of Ada’s last hours, she gradually quieted down, and was not upset when the
doctors told her there was nothing more they could do for her. She lapsed in and out of consciousness, but
spent her lucid moments comforting Frank who told Ada he could not live without her. Frank also said
the doctors were able get her to take liquids, and every time she drank some water she would say: “See, I
can drink just as perfectly as ever, so I cannot have hydrophobia.” One of the most severe symptoms,
the inability of a rabies victim to swallow water because of severe muscle spasms of the throat and extreme terror, has given the alternative name “hydrophobia” to the disease in humans. Ada was able to drink water at first aided by the opiates the doctors had given her. However, medical literature documents that as death approaches, the spasms of hydrophobia “tend to increase in frequency” happening “spontaneously.” Ada, exhausted from painful convulsions began to grow weaker, and finally went into a coma.

Frank wired Marie on March 4, “Come at once. Ada is dying!” Marie and Aubrey, who was visiting her, hurried from Hammonton to Philadelphia. The only train they could get to New York at that hour was the midnight train. They arrived next morning too late to say good-bye to Ada. She had died at 9:30 p.m. the evening before.

There were differences of opinion between doctors and the coroner’s jury about whether Ada actually died of rabies, though their final ruling was death from hydrophobia. From ancient times it was known that there was a connection between the bite of a rabid dog and the subsequent illness and death of humans from a disease similar to the animal’s. However, as mentioned before, in 1874, no one knew about how to diagnose rabies during the postmortem examination of the brain of the dog that bit Ada. Not as much was known then about the actual progress of the illness, and its symptoms do resemble other diseases.

Today, it is possible to look at the facts of Ada’s case in the light of how much more is known about the disease compared with how her illness progressed, and state that she had rabies. The interval between the animal bite that introduces the virus through the skin and the appearance of rabies symptoms is known as the incubation period. In rabies it varies more than any other disease, but in 85-percent of the cases the incubation period is from two weeks to two months. Ada’s symptoms appeared about a month after she was bitten. It is known now that the location of Ada’s wounds – she was bitten badly on her nose, and around her mouth and eye – would make the incubation period shorter. In every circumstance where the facts are available about Ada’s illness and death: the length of the incubation period, the symptoms that she had, and the details of her dying and how long her final illness lasted, tend to confirm her death to have been from “furious” or “agitated” rabies resulting from the bite of a rabid dog.

Some newspapers reporting the event offered ghastly details, some true, others part of the rabies folklore of the times. They said when Ada was taken off the train, the cold air hitting her face made her scream in agony. That is another symptom: a cold draft may stimulate convulsions. They said she was in such pain at her home that she begged Frank to shoot her, and held a handkerchief in front of her face so she would not see him do it. True or not, there are reports that in some cases, the suffering of rabies victims could be so dreadful, their families begged physicians to consider euthanasia. The *St. Louis Republican* even said that Ada got out of bed, and ran around the room on all fours and barked! Even dying Ada could not escape “the petty notoriety which is not fame … the curiosity that is not interest” used by the press to make circulation-boosting melodrama out of her tragedy.

When Marie and Aubrey arrived March 5, Marie didn’t have much opportunity to mourn herself. She had to make all arrangements as well as comfort grief-stricken Aubrey and Frank who was himself “half insane with grief.” Edward was out of town researching a book, and could not come quickly enough to help them make arrangements to get the casket, transport Ada’s body back to Hammonton, and arrange a funeral there. Ada’s dying request had been to be buried beside her baby daughter Agnes at the Howlands’ place “Casa Tonti” in Hammonton. Frank chose a handsome rosewood casket inlaid with silver with a silver plate engraved with the words “My Ada.” By Friday, March 6, Marie, Frank, and Aubrey accompanied the casket to the New Jersey Railroad Depot, and departed for Hammonton.

Nine-year-old Affie Chesley Brown, Marie’s niece, was living with the Howlands, and later remembered that “the body was put out on the porch for a day or two to preserve it till the funeral,” and “a crowd of curious villagers” came. Marie described the many Hammonton residents coming to pay their respects; some knew Ada from the Women’s Club, from her help with the drama club in the summer, and some were parents of Aubrey’s friends. They viewed “this beautiful, unfortunate woman as she lay in state” among the flowers in the conservatory. “A little orange tree at her feet filled the whole house with its fragrance. Very white and fair she looked … only a tiny line like a crimson thread under the left eye and on the upper lips “remained of the terrible dog bites.”

Marie and Frank made arrangements for a Spiritualist minister, Mr. J.A. Ransom to officiate at the funeral Sunday, March 8, “for Ada, though not perhaps literally connected with any body of Spiritualists,
was really of that faith.” The ceremony was simple. Mr. Ransom tried to say things that would comfort the family. Mrs. Emma Pressey and members of the choir sang appropriate Spiritualist songs, and the members of the Women’s Club, who had turned out in full force, joined in the singing too.

Later that day Aubrey planted four evergreens marking the spot on the grounds of Casa Tonti where his mother Ada lay beside his baby sister Agnes. Edward arrived a few days later and joined the mourners. Affie Chesley Brown was sure his absence from the funeral was proof of his lack of affection for Ada, and Marie was particularly put out with him for not lending his support by helping with the arrangements. He had always been so close to Ada. But Edward explained his absence by saying he was no good at sitting or standing around “looking lugubrious.” He couldn’t stand the people who always came to a funeral “to hear the preacher probe the unhealed wounds of the mourners … to darkly hint that the soul might not be saved.” Edward’s reaction to a clergyman like that would be to “kick him out … such impertinence!”

Considering Ada’s scandalous life, her funeral might have been as described by Edward if conducted by a conventional clergyman like those from her youth. However, Ada’s family had control over Ada’s funeral: if only they could have controlled everything said by the Press. Some newspapers described Ada as a “famous woman;” others called her “infamous.” Many told garbled stories of Ada’s “horrible disfigurement,” told tales of the Bohemians and their Queen’s lurid lives, and even re-hashed the Ada-Gottschalk love affair. The (unknown) author of Ada’s obituary in the New Orleans Republican, March 10, 1874, wrote admiringly of her beauty and talents, adding: “She made no secret of her attachment . . .to Louis Gottschalk, the pianist—as talented and handsome as he was cold and heartless.”

Edward comforted everyone by saying that “a crowd of vampires” from the press always arises “when a person of character” dies. These “miserable scribblers” seize on a celebrity’s death “however terrible and heart rending” pretending to have known the dead person well. They know they can say anything about a dead person who can no longer defend herself. They have the “vile and contemptible motive” of making more money by boosting circulation of their newspapers.

Edward had always admired Ada and they were great friends. He and Marie often reminisced about Ada after her death. He thought she was “very intelligent, very charming, and just escaped being a great woman.” But Marie disagreed, and thought Ada was a “great woman.” Edward pointed out that Ada had never really been free because even though she was courageous enough to live life her own way, she still cared too much about what people thought about her. “A great person must stand above the fogs and miasmas of conventional life.”

Ada had been so indiscreet when she defied convention, she always provoked notoriety, but when she got it, she complained about the bad things people said about her. Edward may have felt she had wasted her gifts by not putting them to the use of social causes, as he and Marie had chosen to do. Ada’s generosity had extended to helping out her own circle of friends but Edward felt Marie was the model of a great woman: one who had helped her friends and family, and the wider world of humanity.

Of course, this is Marie’s account of what Edward said, and one senses that she is reassuring herself that Edward felt that “handsome is as handsome does” after all. Marie loved Ada, and had done for her friend Ada what she did for her own sister Ada; most importantly mothering Ada Clare’s Aubrey, and Ada Moulton’s Mabel. And yet, at some point, it must have been difficult for Marie not to be envious of Ada’s beauty and style even though she appreciated them. Marie often remarked that those gifts were equaled by Ada’s intellectual gifts and generosity of heart to her friends. She thought of Ada as an unusually gifted woman and lovable friend. Ada’s beauty, wit, and willingness to lead an unconventional life survive in “Clara Forest,” one of the two feminist heroines breaking new ground by living self-sufficient lives in Marie’s long novel of social concerns, Papa’s Own Girl, published in 1874.

If there were many black eyes bestowed by the press, there was some glowing praise passed out by prominent people, friends and acquaintances of Ada’s. People were either strongly for her or against her – it is difficult to find a balanced portrait in obituaries and reminiscences. The Clipper obituary, March 14, 1974 was probably the most detailed in terms of writing about her journalistic career that began in the Atlas, and telling about who her friends and writing colleagues were. It mentioned that a full description of Ada’s theatrical career had been in the Clipper’s drama columns over the years.

The unknown writer knew Ada personally, remembering her as a beauty, and as a “woman’s woman” who “against fearful odds had vindicated the integrity of her sex.” He remembered Ada more than once
sitting out a long criminal trial as “the only woman there save that stranger to her, the prisoner at the bar,” because Ada tried to give emotional and journalistic support to a woman who might be facing the gallows. As for Bohemia, that “embodiment of personal journalism” was short-lived because “[i]t became too powerful … and what Death was pleased to leave was soon obliterated by Envy.” The writer thought Ada had been “grossly maligned,” especially by the enemies of Bohemia, but felt she was such a good person that perhaps it would be forgiven her that “she was once Queen of the sparkling intellects who by the force of individual genius … briefly gave direction to metropolitan journalism in New York.”

William Winter served on the Coroner’s Jury and wrote her obituary for the New York Tribune, March 5, 1874. Though biased in her favor and compassionate, he tried to be fair in reporting her whole life including her days as Queen of Bohemia. Summing up, he thought her life had been “for the most part, a life of trouble and sorrow.” He and Lizzie had been so close to her for so long, they certainly observed most of what happened to her, and were also confidants of what her earliest years had been like.

However Winter was quick to mention that in Ada’s last years married to Mr. Frank Noyes and acting on the stage, “her discretion and quiet energy” were rewarded, and she found a “worthy place in her profession.” He felt that “the latter years of her life were passed in honorable industry and quiet happiness.” Whether that was true or not, Winter obviously wanted to make his old friend look as respectable as possible, wanting to correct the “[m]any and harsh words said about her.” He tried to emphasize her virtues, and about one of her virtues, her gift of friendship, he did not have to exaggerate or lie. He and Lizzie, Zavarr Wilmshurst, Marie and Edward Howland, and Charles Warren Stoddard could testify to that. The friends that Ada Clare made she “grappled to her soul with hooks of steel” He felt she was “truly known” only to a few, and by them she will be “mourned till Pity's self is dead.”

William Winter also wrote a sentimental poem about Ada’s sad life, and when Ada’s cousin Paul heard of it, he wrote Winter a letter two weeks after her death asking for a copy, and expressing his grief over what had happened to Ada. First Hayne gushed with praise for Winter’s poetry, and added, “Your last poem, I am told, to the memory of ‘Ada Clare’ is exquisitely pathetic.” He begged for a copy for himself and proposed, with Winter’s permission, to reissue it in magazines in the South, “where Ada was born, and where not a few remember her with affectionate interest.” He did not mention Emily Hayne’s embarrassment about Ada’s scandalous life, later mentioned by William Hayne. He then told Winter he was Ada’s first cousin, and that they had been raised like brother and sister under the same roof. Hayne wrote of how promising her beauty and intellect had been in her youth.

However the beginnings of the “lurid, stormy noontide of her existence and its most awful close,” he attributed to her going North, and “falling in with Gottschalk, for whom she conceived the most violent passion.” After that, she was “lost to her family and friends”: her life went downhill from then on. Thinking of her, he wrote of tears rushing to his eyes, and such a full heart he could only moan, “God, what a riddle is this life of ours!”

Ever the man of letters, Hayne next said he had written a poem about Ada too, and sent it to the Graphic, and certainly hoped he’d be hearing from Winter soon. In all his grieving, he was still determined to make the best of a new literary contact. Winter at that time, after so many struggles, was successful as the Tribune’s drama critic, was writing books, and had gained a certain amount of literary influence.

Earlier, Hayne wrote a poem about Ada after her death that he immediately sent off to be published. In fact, Hayne’s quick yet ambivalent responses to her death, reveal much. As Ada’s kinsman he had sometimes felt responsible for her, and yet was ashamed of her scandalous behavior, and tried to find some explanation for it. Earlier letters had revealed that he also envied whatever attention she had commanded in the New York literary world.

The poem Hayne wrote, “At Last,” mentions “bad blood”, and the “morbid influences” as reasons for her downfall he describes thus:

Untimely warmed young passion in the bud--
Wherefore the scarlet flowers of sin did blow,
Of sin and pain: all evil blooms that grow
When virtue’s bonds are passed--"
In the third stanza Hayne wrote that “somewhere in heaven...redemption waits on her”, even though her “guilt seems vast”. He sent it off to Harper's with an explanatory letter about being inspired by Ada's death because he was the cousin of the late Queen of Bohemia. But then he had second thoughts, and wrote several days later saying that perhaps it would be better not to mention his relationship to Ada Clare, or any reference to the poem being about “The Queen of Bohemia.” By then his “second thoughts” probably arose because many of the newspaper obituaries mentioned Ada’s scandalous life, and Paul’s shame about her notoriety overcame his wish to express his grief over her death as a family member. Harper's rejected the poem, and “At Last” was published April 11, 1874 in the Graphic. “At Last” has never been included in his published collections, but his wife Minna probably is the one who put it with a clipping about Ada’s death into an envelope marked: “Ada – notices of her death – a poem written by Paul.”

Walt Whitman, who had not been in close touch with her in the years from 1867-1874, mourned the end of “the gay, easy, sunny, carefree, and not ungood life of Ada Clare.” Edwin Booth, the noted actor, knew Ada through their mutual acquaintances, William and Lizzie Winter, and wrote Winter, April 26, 1874, “Poor Ada! My acquaintance with her was brief but that little convinced me that her heart was golden, and that suffering had mellowed not hardened the true woman. William Dean Howells, who newly came to the New York literary world in 1860 had admired Ada for her sprightly gift of letters, was now in 1874, an established writer, and wrote, “Her fate, pathetic at all times, out-tragedies almost any other in the history of letters.”

There were many like Howells, who remembered her as the young, beautiful Queen of Bohemia in her heyday: it was as if she had died as a queen, “young and fair,” and “brightness” had fallen from the air. As her loving friend Stoddard wrote later, “The Queen is dead; but who shall cry ‘Long live the Queen’ in her stead?” He felt her death symbolized the end of the best days for all Bohemians. The first Bohemia would never come again, though no one would have imagined then that successive Bohemias in Greenwich Village with their own stars and eccentrics would come in the future.

There was no word from Ada’s old friend, Henry Clapp, Jr., former editor of the Saturday Press who sat at the head of the table at Pfaff’s during the heyday of the first Bohemia. He had written for the Leader during the late ’60s. (In 1869, he had written a beautiful tribute when Gottschalk died.) But by the early ’70s he was spending more frequent periods in institutions for alcoholics trying to dry out. Old friends paid his bills, and some like Edmund C. Stedman corresponded with him. However his periods of uncontrollable drinking grew longer and longer, and his physical health grew worse. He died April 2, 1875, scarcely a year after Ada.

There are so many contradictions in Ada Clare’s character plus the varied events in her life and those who interacted with her, It is difficult to form a balanced, final statement to summarize her life. She was known in her day for her witty and perceptive columns revealing the cultural life of her era. However she certainly left literary work because her only novel was unappreciated by those whose opinion seemed very important to her. This differed from her lifelong feisty attitude defending herself against all kinds of criticism. As for her emotional life, her compulsively enduring sorrow over her unrequited love for Gottschalk ended in a marriage of love and convenience to Frank Noyes. However much she loved the stage and seemed to be on the threshold of some kind of success, the exhausting life of stock company actors, plus Frank’s own erratic personality, and her failing health may have given the coup de grâce to her hopes for dramatic success and domestic security.

Another way of considering her life is from the perspective of how she was able to survive at all living a life radically different than the one she was raised for, in the “woman’s sphere” of respectable wifehood and motherhood. She had no role model to follow that would tell her how to live successfully as a “New Woman.” The fact that she broke away from her early roots to make a completely new life, and never returned home is amazing.

Another Charleston born and bred woman writer Susan Petigru King Bowen, is most closely analogous to Ada and invites comparison. She was from a similar background, raised in a wealthy Southern background and educated to be the wife of either a planter, a successful professional, or businessman, to be the mother of children and the mistress of a plantation. Sue, as she was called by her family, had some literary success in short stories and novels in which she satirized the family and background she had come
Ada never returned to Charleston. She entered the marketplace as a writer and actress. Whatever happened then, she did struggle on. She took whatever cards Fate dealt her, and did the best she could with them. It did take courage to do that, however foolhardy some of her decisions may seem. To me her greatest success was her struggle toward autonomy. Perhaps emotionally she was never able to “leave home” completely, and was very conflicted and felt some shame about living out the consequences of her choices, but then half her life, the formative years, were spent in Charleston, and her new life was radically at odds with the way she was raised. In the end Ada Clare may have seemed far removed from Charleston. Yet she was always the beautiful, fashionably dressed, elegant, hospitable woman she was raised to be though moving in the environs of Bohemia, rather than in Charleston society. The example of her pioneering ancestors from both the Lowcountry and the Upcountry may have inspired Ada’s spirit of independence and search for a new life, even though her quest took her where no one else from her world, raised to be a lady, had gone before.

One must especially admire her courage claiming her son born out of wedlock as her own and raising him – it would have been easier to make financial arrangements with foster parents, and pretend he had never been born. Maybe she could not foresee problems that would arise. Biology certainly affected her destiny. She could not live her own life freely, and raise Aubrey too. From the beginning there were problems with just how she could give him a stable environment, and also how to deal with his feelings about being illegitimate, in reaction to how the world he lived in would treat his illegitimacy. When he got older and bigger, they eventually had to leave their understanding circle of Bohemian friends. As discussed earlier, when they traveled he was instructed to call his mother, Ada Clare, because people “didn’t know who we were.” He got even bigger, and he was supposed to call her his sister. She could not deal with having a big boy call her “Mama.” Yet however vain Ada may seem wanting to hold on to her youth, she always provided for Aubrey’s well-being. It was a good day for them both when she made arrangements for Aubrey to live with Edward and Marie Howland: certainly a more stable environment for him compared with raising him backstage. One of the strongest motives for her marriage was to give Aubrey a father and a real surname. Her arrangements in her will, and her choice of her lawyer friends John and Clarence Mitchell as executors prove that she wanted Aubrey to have the finest education possible. She made every effort to make sure his share of her estate would always be protected.

No one today is able to read the best of her journalism because it is buried in old newspapers not all on microfilm, and so far has not been collected and published. The best of her writing illuminated the American cultural scene of her era, and her writing about women is especially perceptive. Scholars are editing and publishing the writing of some American women writers who influenced Ada like Fanny Fern, and the ones Ada wrote about and encouraged like Gail Hamilton. At least in their day, they arranged for their shorter work to be collected into books. Unfortunately, Ada never did that – she concentrated on trying to have her novels published.
By the turn of the century Ada’s surviving acquaintances and friends, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Charles Warren Stoddard, and especially Marie Howland wrote of Ada, and the important though small role the Bohemians had played in their literary day. Stedman especially felt that if the Bohemians had only survived and been writing after the 1870s they all would have been affluent and famous, because a variety of magazines and newspapers proliferated and paid much better rates than they ever had. At the very least Pfaff’s Circle had been fervent supporters of the one true genius among them, Walt Whitman, many years before he gained wider acclaim for his work.

There was almost no mention of Ada or the Pfaffians until Albert Parry, a young writer, himself living the Bohemian life in Greenwich Village in the 1930s, was reading over old newspapers in the New York Public Library, and re-discovered Ada and the first Bohemians. He wrote Garrets and Pretenders, the marvelous classic history of the Bohemians who lived in Greenwich village down through the years. The first chapters he wrote for the book were about the rise and fall of Ada Clare, the Queen of the very first Bohemia in America. Ada captivated him, Parry told me because, “She was a kindred spirit” – and so she has been my “kindred spirit,” and the courage she displayed throughout her life has inspired me to write this book. Ada simply wanted to live her own life, free to develop her talent, and be herself, no simple matter for anyone, male or female. Even though she was “born too soon” for all the freedoms women seem to have won today, amazingly, women still confront many of the same problems Ada did, and indeed, anyone engaged in struggling for autonomy and self-expression may find Ada Clare a “kindred spirit” too.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gloria Rudman Goldblatt is an independent scholar who spent decades doing archival research exploring the life of Bohemian writer and actress Ada Clare after encountering a brief mention of her in an encyclopedia. A graduate of Washington University, Ms. Goldblatt lives in St. Louis, Missouri. Though she has lived a traditional family life, she has always been an under-the-radar Bohemian.
For Further Reading:

Rebel Souls: Walt Whitman And America's First Bohemians by Justin Martin (Da Capo Press, 2014)

The Antebellum Crisis And America's First Bohemians by Mark A. Lause (Kent State University Press, 2009)

International Bohemia by Daniel Cottom (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)

Whitman Among The Bohemians (eds.) Joanna Levin and Edward Whitley (University of Iowa Press, 2014)

Bohemians In America 1858–1920 by Joanna Levin (Stanford University Press, 2010)

American Cultural Rebels 1850s-1960s by Roy Kotynek and John Cohassey (McFarland and Company, 2008)


Guide to Footnotes


Names most frequently used are often cited by initials after first citation, such as Ada Clare, A.C.; Paul Hamilton Hayne, P.H.H., etc.

Notes for Introduction

1 N.B. I have called Ada Clare, Ada, throughout this book because her first name was consistent throughout her life. She was born Ada Agnes Jane McElhenney. When doing research on her in South Carolina one must look under that name, (minus the Jane) often added to Ada Clare. She made Ada Clare her pen name and later her legal name after moving to New York City. After her marriage in 1868, she was known onstage and legally as Ada Noyes, though from 1867-1868 she used the stage name Agnes Stanfield.


3 Miller, 23. This is an 1851 collection of stories originally serialized in the journal, Le Corsaire. This was the inspiration for the libretto of Puccini’s La Boheme, first produced in 1895.

4 Background of Bohemia and Bohemians at Pfaff’s Circle from Parry, Garrets and Pretenders (New York, 1960). Hereafter, Parry. I have used this paperback reprint edition for citations because it offers more information included in its Addenda to the 1933 earlier hardcover edition published by Covici-Friede in 1933. That edition is out of print and scarce. Parry’s work was the original complete source for information on Bohemia in Greenwich Village. This has been considerably expanded by the October 9, 1990 exhibition Within Bohemia’s Borders: Greenwich Village 1850-1930 curated by Jan Seidler Ramirez at the Museum of the City of New York, and the associated book by Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993). Hereafter Beard and Berlowitz.


6 Stoddard, “QOB”

7 Under the pseudonym of “Alastor, “she wrote about the affair in the New York Atlas “Whips and Scorns of Time,” December 7, 1856; and in “Pangs of Despised Love,” December 28, 1856. Finally she revealed herself in an article titled “Ada Clare on Suicide,” January 4, 1857. However, everyone knew about the love affair.

Notes for Chapter 1

9 Basic genealogical details of the Wilkinson, McElhenney, and Wilson families from The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine, April, 1925 and October 1932; A.S. Salley, Jr. (ed.) Marriage Notices in the South Carolina Gazette, and Brent H. Holcomb (ed.), Marriage and Death Notices from the Charleston Times –1800-1821; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, South Carolina Census, 1840, 1850, 1860; unpublished family records of the Wilkinson and Wilson families gathered by John Boineau, local historian of Meggett, South Carolina; family lore recalled by Dr. G. Fraser Wilson of Charleston, and Rebecca Hanahan of Winnsboro, South Carolina; and the McElhenney Family folder in the South Carolina Historical Society in Charleston, South Carolina. Hereafter SCHS.

Historic Houses of South Carolina in the chapter “John’s Island and Edisto Island” gives details of the Wilkinson family’s Lowcountry homes and history. On page 292-293 are history and pictures of Fort Hill, first Ada’s grandfather James McElhenney’s home, then enlarged by John C. Calhoun, now on Clemson University campus. Details of the Reverend James McElhenney, Sr.’s life are in George Howe, History of the Presbyterian Church in South Carolina (2 volumes) (Columbia 1870-1883), vol., 61, 299-302.

The wills of Ada’s father, James McElhenney, her paternal grandmother Susannah Wilkinson McElhenney, and her maternal grandfather Hugh Wilson are rich in family information — they can be located by using the Index to Wills of Charleston County, South Carolina 1671-1868 (Charleston Library Society, 1950.) They are on microfilm in South Carolina Department of Archives and History; Columbia, South Carolina.


12 Ibid., 300.

13 There were no birth certificates in South Carolina in 1834, and in general it is difficult to find records in the state. Many papers were destroyed during the Civil War. After a thorough search, I am unable to find Ada’s parents’ marriage record or Ada’s baptismal certificate. At the time of Ada’s birth, the McElhenneys probably belonged to the Wiltown Presbyterian Church in St. Paul’s Parish near their plantation, but I have been unable to find that church’s baptismal and marriage records. The family joined the Second Presbyterian Church in Charleston in 1837, and her sister Susan’s baptism is recorded in their records now in Montreat, North Carolina.

Ada’s birth in July 1834 is validated by her lawyers’ letter in 1855 replying to a query about the date of Ada’s 21st birthday for the purpose of processing her inheritance. This and other important legal records and letters are in the Ada A. (Ada Clare) McElhenney Files in the Manuscript Collection: South Caroliniana Library; University of South Carolina; Columbia, South Carolina hereafter AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

14 This information was given to me by Rebecca Hanahan, of Winnsboro, South Carolina, November 1985. She was Adelaide Wilson Hanahan’s great-granddaughter.


16 Paul Hamilton Hayne, hereafter PHH, to William Winter, March 19, 1874, in the Collection of Robert Young, Jr. (Great-grandson of Winter), Sacramento, California.

17 Ada Clare, “Whips and Scorns.”

18 Emily Hayne to Lt. Paul H. Hayne, Sr. from Toogoodoo, May 10, 1831; Paul Hamilton Hayne Collection; Perkins Library; Duke University; Durham, North Carolina, hereafter PHHC, DU.

20 A draft of James McElhenney’s 1838 will is in Papers of Edward McCrady, Sr., Manuscript Collection of the South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina. Hereafter McCrady Papers, SChS.

21 Records of the Dispersal of Estate of James McElhenenny 1841-1848, afterwards the Dispersal of Estates of James and Joanna McElhenney 1848-1859 in Probate Records, Charleston County Courthouse; Charleston, South Carolina. Inventory of the McElhenney estate and other legal records are in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

22 I recorded Joanna McElhenney’s tombstone inscription while visiting the McElhenney family burial place with John Boineau, local historian, August 15, 1983. It is now on land owned by the Smoak family near Meggett, South Carolina. The plantation home is gone but the location is known locally as McElhenney Flats.

23 Transaction recorded in Edward McCrady, Sr.’s Daily Desk Diary, McCrady Papers, SChS.


26 The names of the friends and dates and descriptions of conferences about the McElhenney children are in the McCrady Desk Diaries, McCrady Papers, SChS.

27 More details about Ada’s name change later.


30 P.H.H. to Susan Hayne, September 20, 1848, in PHHC, DU.

31 Background on women’s upbringing and education in the planter class plus the social and cultural scene in Charleston from Taylor, Chapters III, VIII, and IX. For a general discussion of educating women in nineteenth century America see Mary Kelley, Private Woman, Public Stage (Oxford University Press, 1984), Chapter 3: “The Season of Instruction.” Hereafter, Kelley.

32 The other school was the Madame Du Pre’ School. Details on the Bates School from Mrs. I. M.E. Blandin, History of Higher Education for Women in the South (Neale Publishing Company, 1909): 253-255. Neale called the Bates sisters “those cultivated ladies ...beloved and revered by their pupils.” An 1852 prospectus of the Bates School is in the SChS.

33 Mary Bates to Charles Dana, Jr., January 8 and July 4, 1839, Mary Bates File, Caroliniana, U.S.C. Charles Dana, Jr., shortly to live at Brook Farm later became prominent in journalism and politics. He was Greeley’s assistant editor at the Tribune and later became owner and editor of the New York Sun.

It is possible that Bates’ school brought in a professor from a local college to teach mathematics.

Mr. O.B. Broyles to Miss M.E. Broyles, April, 1852, from Maverick and Van Wyck Families Collection, Caroliniana, USC.

Later many men and women would write of her beauty. The most complete physical description of her is by her close friend, Charles Warren Stoddard, Stoddard, “QOB.”


*Ibid*.


A.C. (A.A.M.) to J.M., September 25, 1854, JM Papers, SCHS.

Details of the life and literary career of Henry Timrod (1828-1867) from Ed Winfield Parks, *Henry Timrod* (Twayne Publishers, Inc. with, New Haven, Conn., College and University Press, 1964). Timrod’s fine lyric poetry about the South made him the “laureate of the Confederacy”–his poems about the Confederacy and the Civil War are considered his best.

*A Charleston Book: A Miscellany in Prose and Verse* (Charleston: Samuel Hart, 1845). William Gilmore Simms was the initiator and editor of this publication in an effort to give encouragement and exposure to local authors. (There is a modern reprint of the this book.)

This magazine *(c.1830-1890)* had several name changes in its day but the above was current with Ada’s times. It offered women stories, poems, essays on important topics as well as housekeeping, and illustrations of the latest fashions. Its circulation was huge–just before the Civil War it reached 150,000. Its editors included founder Louis Godey, the remarkable Sarah Josepha Hale and Lydia Sigourney.

For an excellent discussion of how the rapid growth of nineteenth-century American publishing paralleled the rising popularity of American women writers see Kelley, 7-27.


See Pease and Pease for details of Sue King’s life and her other publications.

The complete series from 1854-1855 of the *Charleston College Magazine*, Second Series, Vol. I, numbers 1-10, Vol. ii, numbers 1, 2, hereafter *CCM*, is in the Archives of the College of Charleston; Charleston, South Carolina. Almost all articles are signed with initials or pseudonyms, but the copies I saw have the names of the contributors written in. Ada’s authorship can also be validated by the discussions of her articles in her correspondence with Julian Mitchell, one of the editors, during this same time period.
Robert Croom Aldredge, “The Magazine”, *The College of Charleston Magazine*, April 1926, 346-352. There have been three different series of the magazine. Ada was writing for the second series, 1854-1855.

55 Details of Julian Mitchell’s life from his obituary in *Charleston Yearbook*, 1907, pg. 325 and short biography in *Confederate Military History* (Confederate Publishing Company, 1899), Vol. 5, 755. He graduated from Charleston College in 1855 magna cum laude, studied law, was First Secretary to the Legation in Russia when Ada’s cousin Francis Wilkinson Pickens was Minister to Russia in 1860, returned to Charleston in March, 1861, and then served with distinction as Major in the Confederate Army. He successfully practiced law after the war, and headed the city school board and served on the state commission of education for many years.

56 Harriett Marion Stephens (1823-1858) published in and edited journals. Ada’s review is of a collection of her stories in book form. “Fanny Fern” was the pen name of Sara Payson Willis Parton (1811-1872). Her novels and prolific articles brought her fame and financial rewards—she was one of the most highly paid and popular writers of her day. She achieved this on her own: her brother, Nathaniel Parker Willis, a wealthy and successful editor and writer refused to publish her work or help her.

57 A discussion of these articles including Horace Greeley’s comments are in John Olin Eidson, *Tennyson in America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1943): 64.

58 A.A.M., “Tennyson’s ‘Princess’,” *CCM*, May, 1854. All the contributors used initials or pseudonyms, as was the custom.


Before Starr’s book came out, I carefully studied books and magazine articles about Gottschalk and listened to all his recorded music. I am indebted to the late Professor John G. Doyle for a 12- year correspondence
and telephone discussions during which he helped me enormously even as we shared information. His bibliography on Gottschalk, John G. Doyle, *Louis Moreau Gottschalk, 1829-1869: A Bibliographical Study and Catalog of Works*, (Detroit: Information Coordinators for The College Music Society, 1982) hereafter Doyle Bibliography, added to Starr’s bibliography provides every reference needed about Gottschalk.

I have had several long telephone conversations, a personal interview, and much information and assistance from the late Robert Offergeld, a former editor of *Stereo Review* and a musicologist whose death prevented his completion of a Gottschalk biography.

I have also read the original and modern editions of Gottschalk’s diaries: Clara Gottschalk (ed.), *Notes of a Pianist by Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co., 1881) and the modern edition, Jeanne Behrend (ed.), *Notes of a Pianist by Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964); hereafter LMG: NOP, Behrend. Most of my citations are to the modern edition. I only refer to the earlier edition for information only available in its foreword or addenda.

65 William Mason, another noteworthy American pianist and friend of Gottschalk also claimed to be first with solo recitals, according to John Doyle.


67 Sue King dealt with the contrasts of the fun and opportunities of being a courted belle as opposed to being a planter’s wife, isolated on a rural plantation preoccupied with child-bearing and managing the plantation to extent of foregoing personal self-expression in the arts. This story “Old Maidism versus Marriage” is reprinted in Susan Koppelman (ed.), *Old Maids: Short Stories by Nineteenth Century U.S. Women Writers*. (Boston: Pandora Press, 1984): 65-85.

68 Information on Eugene McElhenney’s marriage and plantation from records and letter in McCrady Papers and *U.S.D.C. South Carolina Census 1860*. Eugene’s son James, probably an only child, was born in 1856. Though still alive in 1864, James was said to have died young.

69 According to Rosen, 93. “Charlestonians led the fight against abolition. When anti-slavery tracts arrived in Charleston, the local postmaster would not deliver them. A mob appeared on one occasion to enforce this censorship of the mails.” This gives some idea of the local feeling about anti-slavery publications.

70 McCrady Papers, SCHS records and describes conferences about Ada with varied family and friends on May 31, June 19, June 22, June 26, and June 27, 1854.

71 In *Times* ship arrival column, July 3, 1854, Ada Agnes McElhenney is listed among those arriving in New York on steamship *James Adger* from Charleston.

72 A.A.M. (A.C.) to J.M. August 14, 1854, JM Papers, SCHS.

73 P.H.H. to Minna Hayne, July, 1854, PHH, DU.

74 In legal records and correspondence AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC

75 A.A.M. (A.C.) to J.M., September 25, 1854, JM Papers, SCHS.


78 A.A.M. (A.C.) to J.M. September 25, 1854, JM Papers, SCHS.

Information on Giulia Grisi (1811-1869) and Mario (1810-1883) and their run at Castle Garden from Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: Vol. 2 Reverberations: 1850-1856* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 513-526. Hereafter Lawrence. They could not be married legally and in the church because of Grisi’s previous marriage in Catholic France, but they (and the public) considered themselves husband and wife.


There are several contemporary painters named Ransom listed in Mary Bartlett Cowdery, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record, 1826-1860*, I, 89-90 (Printed for New York Historical Society, 1943). Hereafter *N.A.D.E.R*. Of these painters, Alexander Ransom, who was working in New York 1853-1855, has an exhibition schedule and painted subject matter that exactly agrees with Ada’s description of when and where her likenesses were exhibited in the March 12, 1855 letter to Mitchell as listed in *N.A.D.E.R.* and Mabel Swan, *The Athenaeum Gallery, Boston Museum, 1827-1873* (Boston, 1940).

Ada probably commissioned Ransom’s first portrait of her, and then was willing to be his model at no charge to him, an advantage for an artist who made his living by painting portraits.

Ada mentioned these temporarily disabling headaches often during her life, sometimes calling them “neuralgia.” Today’s diagnosis would probably be migraine headaches. This would fit with Ada’s highly intense personality, including her sudden mood swings from elation to depression. The nineteenth century adjective for those mood swings was “rhapsodical.”

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86 Ada mentioned these temporarily disabling headaches often during her life, sometimes calling them “neuralgia.” Today’s diagnosis would probably be migraine headaches. This would fit with Ada’s highly intense personality, including her sudden mood swings from elation to depression. The nineteenth century adjective for those mood swings was “rhapsodical.”

87 Ada to JM, November 29, 1854.


Winter, 313.


Horace Greeley (1811-1872) exerted great influence with his editorials particularly those championing labor organizations, a protective tariff, temperance, and Fourierism. In support of the Homestead Law, he originated the saying “Go West, Young Man.” He opposed monopolies and slavery, including anything that politically aided slavery’s expansion. He supported Lincoln’s candidacy, and after the Civil War urged giving Blacks the right to vote. In 1872 he was the presidential candidate of the Liberal and Democratic parties, but did not win. From *OCA*, 297-298.

Spiller, 519.
Wood, 63-65.

97 “Grub Street” was a term that began to be used in 1600s London for the area in London where writers lived, especially Moorfields. Since many of those writers were poorly paid and had to “grub” for a living, that term became synonymous with any writer in that situation.

Spiller, 65.


100 Tebbel, 65.

101 Ibid, 73.

102 Mott, vol.1, 494.

103 P.H.H. to R.H. Stoddard, January 1, 1855, McKeithan, 3.

Notes for Chapter 3

104 The Atlas had a long run (1828-1881). See Mott, HOAM, 37-38, for Atlas and other weeklies mentioned.

105 The February 1855 letter plus April entries recording family conferences in the lawyer’s desk diary in April are in McCrady Papers, SCHS.

106 AAM (AC) to JM, March 12, 1855, JM Papers, SCHS.

107 Ibid.


109 Ibid.

110 Garff B. Wilson writes that if a player expected to hold the attention of the audience: “he had to project strong emotion and vivid action. The dimness of the lighting forced him to use broad sweeping movements . . . The size of the auditorium and the uncertainty of the acoustics forced him to use stentorian tones,” in A History of American Acting, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966): 12.

111 Among the many who praised her fascinating personality and her beauty were John Burroughs, William Dean Howells, Edwin Booth, William Winter, Charles Warren Stoddard, Walt Whitman, and Marie and Edward Howland. Drama critic Andrew Wheeler, who disliked her and thought she was immoral, nevertheless praised her magnetic personality and said it made her seem beautiful even though her face was rather ordinary in his obituary for Ada, March, 1874, Charleston Courier.

112 Olive Logan, actress, playwright, and author of Ada’s era, wrote an excellent book about how actors learned their craft and other details of the everyday theater world: Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes, (New York: Parmelee, 1870).

113 Maeder, 92.

114 Biographical details about Edward G.P. Wilkins (1829-1861) from Miller, Chapter Three. Wilkins’s observations on novice actresses from Leader, December 22, 1860 quoted in Miller, 59-60.

115 Biographical details about Zavarr Wilmshurst (born William Bennett) from his obituary January 27, 1887 in the Times and the Nineteenth Century Appleton’s Cyclopedia of American Biography, Volume W, 545. Details of his mentor Lady Blessington’s exciting life are in Kunitz and Haycraft (eds.) Nineteenth Century British Authors.

116 PHH to RHS, August 28, 1855, McKeithan, 13.
General background on the mid-nineteenth century New York theater world and information on specific players, their companies, and theaters, unless otherwise noted, are from OCAT and CGAT, enlarged paperback edition.

Background on how the growth of New York City and its theaters were interconnected from Mary C. Henderson, *The City & The Theatre*, (Clifton, New Jersey: James T. White & Company, 1973), Chapter Two: “The Park and the Bowery, (1798-1850)” and Chapter Three: “Lower Broadway (1850-1870).”


Information on Madame Vestris can be found in Leo Waitzkin, *The Witch of Wych Street*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933).

Henneke, 24.

Dudden, 126-127.


Dudden, 132-138, subtitled “Women’s Plays,” deals with Laura Keene’s and some others’ efforts to deliver these kinds of plays. Dudden feels Keene was successful insofar as “the female segment of the population was never separate or independent as it always depended on men for escort service and ticket prices. But its power was palpable and Laura Keene seems to have understood its interests.”

Details from her autobiography, Rose Eytinge, *Memories of Rose Eyetinge*, (New York: Frederic Stokes Company, 1905): 19-22. Eytinge (1835-1911) apprenticed in stock for ten seasons before she appeared in lead roles with all the major acting companies of her day and was a popular and critical success.

Rachel (1820-1858), daughter of a poor Jewish family acting troupe, was internationally famed by then and toured Europe and America. Encouraged by Jules Janin (whose journalism style would later influence the Bohemians of Pfaff’s Circle), she revived the French tragedies particularly of Corneille and Racine; Phedre was her most famous role. This 1855 tour of America aggravated the tuberculosis that killed her. Details from OCAT, 785.

Harriet Farley (1817-1907), a factory worker herself, edited the *Lowell Offering* (1842-1845) that became the *New England Offering* (1847-1850) publishing the writings of women mill hands. She published other books,
too. Details from OCAL. Professor Holly Blake’s Ph.D. thesis on Marie Howland is indispensable and is available on UMI (microfilm online from University of Michigan.)

Details of Marie, Anna, and Getty’s boarding house life from a letter, M.H. to Edmund Clarence Stedman, April 21, 1907, Columbia University Libraries Special Manuscript Collection, Edmund Clarence Stedman Collection. Hereafter CUSMC, ECS.

After a sporadic singing career, Anna would teach music at the newly opened Vassar College in 1869. Later she became a journalist, and then spent time in India as a journalist and missionary. She wrote a book about the female followers of Buddha, ending her days in Berkeley, California, writing and lecturing until her death at 95. Biography from John Leonard (ed.) Woman’s Who’s Who of America, (New York: American Commonwealth Company, 1914-1915): 72.

Biographical details about Getty are hard to find. The information on her real name and tentative age and death from consumption are from the diary of Thomas Gunn who had read her obituary in an obscure newspaper. In Thomas Butler Gunn, “Diaries” (MS), Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, MO, vol.13, September 30, 1860. Gunn, a transplanted Englishman, had a successful but not well-paid career as an illustrator (particularly of satirical cartoons) and journalist in New York City. He was envious of Pfaff’s Circle of Bohemians, and especially maligned the women, calling Getty “one of the literary unfortunate females and Bohemians,” and in this entry calling Ada “the fast literary woman.” In another diary entry he admitted he admired her intellect and talent.

Biographical details from OCAL, 32-33.

The best source remains Carl J. Guarner’s The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994)

See “Jane Cunningham Croly,” N.AW, vol.1, 409-411. The impetus for Croly founding the first women’s club was the exclusion of women journalists from the New York Press Club’s reception for Charles Dickens in 1868.

For more description of life at the Brownstone Utopia, also called the Unitary Home, from Edmund Clarence Stedman, poet, critic and later stockbroker who lived there, see LLECS, 1. Marie also lived there and reminisced in M.H. to E.C.S. April 7, 1907, CUSMC, ECS.

“ABB,” 102.

Biographical details about Henry Clapp, Jr. are in Parry, 21-25, 43-48; Miller, 15-17 and Chapter 2, “Henry Clapp, Jr”; Winter, Chapter 2, “Bohemian Days.”

Gaston, 29.

This informative article about The Club, “The Free Lovers,” appeared on the front page of the October 10, 1855 Times.

The Times had regular reports on what happened October 18, 1855 and afterward, and were probably fairer than some of the other papers reporting. On October 24 they reported the culmination of the trial with Henry Clapp’s impassioned defense.

Henneke, 56. Keene’s theater had opened several months earlier in the dead of winter, and she worked 5 or 6 weeks ahead picking plays and hiring additional casts, knowing that more people would attend theater with warmer weather and new theater bills.


The most well known exception that praised it was Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Notes for Chapter 4

LMG: NOP, Behrend, 165, 212.

Doyle suggests in Bibliographical Study 4, that in his 1880 Spanish-language biography of Gottschalk, South American journalist Luis Fors “frequently referred to the composer’s love affairs, thus setting a trend” for viewing the musician as a Casanova. Fors did not meet the musician until 1867, so Doyle notes on page 54, that sections of Fors’ biography dealing with Gottschalk’s younger years were based on Hensel’s 1870 book and some other French sources hence not reliable.

Clara Louise Kellogg, Memoirs of an American Prima Donna, (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913): 107. However she had no reservations about his musical abilities. Commenting on them during his pseudo-duel with Thalberg in Fall, 1856, she said “it was Gottschalk who could ‘play the birds off the trees and the heart out of your breast’ as the Irish say.” Kellogg (1842-1916) was the first American born, American trained prima donna to have international acclaim.

Pasqualino Brignoli (1824-1884) was already a well-known tenor in Europe when he launched his American career in 1856 where he was highly successful for thirty years.

Even before Gottschalk’s sister Clara edited the original 1881 version of his diary after her husband Dr. Peterson translated it from the French, the family had had extreme difficulties getting hold of it. Gottschalk had died in Brazil in 1869, and it took four years for the Brazilian government to release his trunk full of papers and personal effects. The diaries were scattered in hundreds of pieces of torn, mildewed, almost illegible papers. It is impossible to tell what Clara edited, and what was lost before that. Behrend, xvii, footnote, comments that several persons very important to Gottschalk like his mother and his brother Edward are not mentioned in the edited version, and conjectures that perhaps a reference to Ada Clare has also disappeared.

MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, and MHUM.

S. Frederic Starr, in exhaustively researching his biography of Gottschalk, was not able to find any more information about the love affair than I did. After many discussions about this, Starr and I agree that Ada and Gottschalk had a love affair and that he then rejected her. We do not agree on what happened next, which I discuss in this chapter and Chapters Four and Five.

Gottschalk and Clapp had a mutual interest in politics and literature besides their interest in the musical and theatrical world. Clapp knew the musician well enough to write a beautiful tribute to his memory that shows extensive knowledge of Gottschalk’s personality and opinions in the Leader in 1869. It is included in a biographical sketch in Clara Gottschalk’s 1881 edition of the Diaries.


The playbill is from the collection of The Humanities Research Center of the University of Texas Libraries, Austin, Texas.

Henneke, 50-51.
160 As reported by Starr, this article is in one of Gottschalk’s scrapbooks in the New York Public Library Performing Arts Collection at Lincoln Center in New York City. The musician probably saved it because Ada mentioned him as one of the “Male Beauties” with special praise.

161 LMG: NOP, Behrend, 92.

162 MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, ECS.

163 MHUM, 3, 43-54.

164 Ibid.

165 LMG: NOP, Behrend, 211.

166 Ibid, 283.

167 Ibid., 130-131.

168 Ibid., 192.

169 Starr, 191-192. Starr speculates about some reasons for Gottschalk not ever marrying: he could not afford to because he was the sole support for his mother and six siblings, and he may have had problems with his sexual identity that “drove him . . . to endless sexual relationships with women but . . . caused him in the end to draw back every time.”


171 Ibid.

172 Ibid., 41-43. Gottschalk originally excerpted this from his diary and published them along with other excerpts in the Atlantic Monthly, 1865. See Starr, 280-281.

173 “Rules and Regulations of Laura Keene’s Varieties” in Laura Keene File in CMD, LOC.

174 Each member of a stock company was entitled to a salary plus a share (or perhaps all) of box office receipts for a performance in which they took the lead or a major role. Of course ingenues like Ada who took small parts had smaller salaries.

175 Times, June 21 and June 23, 1856.


177 Robertson was Boucicault’s second wife and acting partner; his first wife died under mysterious circumstances in Europe. Finally he deserted Robertson, and she only spent seven years in America. However she drew critical acclaim in his plays where she often played simple, charming peasant girls.

178 John Mitchell to Edward McCrady, Sr., August 1856, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

179 Gottschalk’s summer itinerary was reported in detail in the August 1856 Times by music critic Charles Seymour.

180 MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, ECS.

181 Henneke, 54-57 and 59-64.

182 He advertised in many papers including Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, September 20, 1856, 227, and the Times, October 11, 1856, 287.

183 Biographical information on Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871) is from Webster’s Biographical Dictionary, (Springfield, Massachusetts: G &C. Merriam Company, 1980), 1456, and from Lawrence, 701-702. Lawrence points out that the composer-pianist Thalberg was billed as “the greatest living pianist,” a distinction he
shared with Franz Liszt for 30 years. The illegitimate son of a nobleman, he had had an aristocratic upbringing in Vienna.

184 Victor and Laura’s first meeting and romance are portrayed in Ada Clare, *Only a Woman’s Heart* (New York: M. Doolady, 1866): 8-79.


186 Good biographical background about the notorious Madame Restell is by Seymour J. Mandelbaum, “Ann Trow Lohman,” *NAW*, II, 424-425. Mandelbaum suggests that there is considerable evidence Restell was “less an abortionist than a dispenser of contraceptive materials and mistress of a clandestine maternity hospital and adoption agency.”

187 Hensel, 123. His mention of “conscience” in this statement makes me wonder if he means he would only feel compelled to marry in a “shotgun wedding” situation.

188 LMG: NOP, Behrend, 99-100.

189 The *Atlas* was mostly a respected newspaper, but in 1863 when one of the editors, Anson Herrick was elected to Congress, the *Leader* (strongly Democratic and allied with Tammany Hall) stated on December 5 that Herrick was the editor “of a scurrilous, black-mail sheet … known as the *Weekly Atlas*,” and called Herrick a “common libeler” who, for money, would print any kind of character defamation.

190 The longest and most detailed article about Gottschalk’s current status was in the “Amusements” section, *Times*, December 8, 1856.

191 Lawrence, 701-702. She also notes that the musician and manager wisely postponed his first concert until November 11, 1856 when the fiercely fought election campaign, always a distraction from theater and musical performances, would be over.

192 William Henry Fry (1815-1864) was a prominent American composer and music critic. His 1845 opera *Leonora* was the first publicly performed grand opera written by an American. Details from *Webster’s Biographical Dictionary*, 564.

193 Biographical details on Charles Bailey Seymour (1829-1869), the London-born music and drama critic for the *Times* from 1850 until his death, are in *Winter*, 310-313. They were very good friends.


195 Starr, 239.


197 “Duncibella’s” activities prove that were “groupies” even before the era of rock stars and their concerts.

198 Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem aroused England to become aware of how young children suffered when forced by poverty to work in factories and mines. Lord Shaftesbury also spoke in Parliament at the time on the abuses of child labor. “Mr. Wickfield” cannot be found even as a minor poet in any books or anthologies of the day. Ada may have invented him.

199 See James Mellow, “Antique Automata,” *Architectural Digest*, December 1988, 141-145, 204.)

200 In his diary, the musician complained that when he first toured New England in 1853, many reviewers ignored his musical skill and devoted whole columns to his kid gloves, his handsome appearance, and his continental manners. LMG: NOP, Behrend, 48.

201 Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), distinguished British man of letters, wrote *The Everlasting No* at a time of his life when he was experiencing a crisis in his own life and beliefs. In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Sartor Resartus* (1833-1834) Carlyle “dramatized his own spiritual upheaval, and what he saw as the ills of the


204 June, 1983.


206 *Ibid*.

207 Charles Gayler (1820-1892) playwright, sometime actor, and novelist is estimated to have written more than 100 plays of all types ranging from farce to tragedy. He often wrote plays to order for such famous players as Laura Keene, J.W. Wallack, and Lucille Western among many. *OCAT*, 284.

208 Marie wrote of Getty’s love affair and of assisting at the birth of the baby in MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, ECS.

209 No copy of that will survives, but her lawyers’ records show that they charged her for rendering that service. In AC (AAM) Caroliniana, USC.

210 *Ibid*.

211 The Collins and Cunard shipping lines both advertised daily news about all their passenger ships in the *Times*. Its shipping pages published daily arrivals and departures plus ship lists. Ship disasters were front-page news, and were followed for days afterward.


214 Ada’s note and the power of attorney document, both dated January 16, 1857, and the January 17 entry in Ada’s accounts with the Mitchells are in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

215 Weather reports from January 16th and 17th in the *Times* tell of record cold weather.

**Notes for Chapter 5**

216 Ada reminisced about this voyage in “Departure of Strangers,” May 1, 1864, *Era*.

217 Details of steamship travel on the Cunard and Collins lines from their advertisements and relevant news items in the *Times*, 1856-1858.

218 Main source for background on Americans travelling abroad by steamship, and their typical experiences on the continent in the nineteenth century is Foster Rhea Dulles, *Americans Abroad* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964); particularly Chapter IV, about transatlantic luxury ships and travel, and Chapter V, about Americans in Paris, and travelling on the continent.

219 Ada Clare to Clarence Mitchell, one of her attorneys, February 23, 1857, AC (AAM) Caroliniana, USC. The weight gain could refer to her pregnancy and/or rich cuisine on board ship.

220 *Ibid*.


223 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “The Cry of the Children.”

224 Burchell, 69-70, has a description of Worth’s and other luxury shopping.


226 AC to CM, February 23, 1857, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

227 No copies survive of correspondence between Ada and Patania. The only record is what Ada wrote about the correspondence in letters to her lawyers.

228 Ada’s financial accounts as well as correspondence with the her lawyers, John and Clarence Mitchell, are in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

229 Herald, March 14, 1856.

230 LMG: NOP, Behrend, 244-245.

231 “Nouvelles,” La France Musicale, June 28, 1857, 215. The same article contains Gottschalk’s own denial of recent rumors that he had died of yellow fever in Cuba.

232 After Ada married J. Frank Noyes in September 1868, she gave birth to a daughter Agnes in July 1869 who only lived a few weeks.

233 From information I received in a letter June 6, 1984 from Ronald E. Swerczek, Legislative and Diplomatic Branch of the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. He checked the lists of registrations in Paris from both the embassy and consular post records of the time and found no record of Ada registering a birth.

234 Ada arrived in New York Nov. 27, 1857 coming from Le Havre, France on the Vanderbilt. She left Jan. 9, 1858 on the Arago for Southampton and Le Havre.

235 Ship’s manifest of Steamship Vanderbilt from Bremen and Southampton, National Archives 929.173, Micro-Copy 237, Roll 189, Nov. 15, 1858.

236 Ada’s being “scrupulous in caring” for Aubrey is mentioned by Marie Howland in MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, ECS. Also see Chapters 9 and 10 in this book: when Ada toured as a stock company actress, she made careful arrangements for Aubrey to live with her closest friends the Howlands, who cared for him like their own child.

237 Colburn and Holland to John W. Mitchell, Ada’s lawyer, October 14, 1857, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

238 The Times gives many details of how the Panic progressed from the end of summer of 1857 until the beginning of January 1858 when there was some improvement.

239 According to Passenger Arrival Lists in the Times, and the Port of New York ship’s manifest of Steamship Vanderbilt from Le Havre that arrived November 27, 1857.

240 Moise & De Leon Brokers to J.W.M., December 14, 1857, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

241 A.C. to C.M., February 18, 1858, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.


243 Anonymous, A Checkered Life: A Brief History of the Countess Pourtales. (Columbia, South Carolina: Printed at the Office of the Daily Phoenix, 1878), 15-17. Harlan Greene, author and former archivist with the South Carolina Historical Society sent me a copy of the first chapter of the book, and said the author was probably Yates Snowden (1858-1933), an otherwise respectable historian and journalist who sometimes did this sort of satirical writing. One pseudonym was “Felix Old-Boy.”
By 1860, Pickens was eager to be home, especially later in the year when the situation in South Carolina was heating up to crisis. He tried to resign his post in Russia, but no one was appointed to fill his place. He did not return home until October 23, 1860. Julian Mitchell, eager to serve the Confederacy, returned to America in early 1861.


Notes for Chapter 6

The *Times*, December 1, 1858 to January 10, 1859 provides details of New York’s entertainment world.

*Our American Cousin* was a “comedy of Yankee life” by an English playwright. The play as performed by Keene’s company made long-run records. When Keene later performed the play at Ford’s Theater in April 1865, John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln who was in the audience. *OCAL*, 563.

Freeman was a portrait painter and miniaturist who did at least one portrait of Ada in December 1861. She also wrote poetry and was an “elocutionist”. She was born in England, and probably died about 1874, but none of the art references have definite dates of birth and death. She did work and exhibit in New York c.1850s and 1860s. See Mary Bartlett Cowdery, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record*, 1826-1860 (New York, 1943): 170, 345.

*Times*, December 1, 1858 to January 10, 1859.

Stoddard, *QOB*, 642.


Winter, 63-64; Parry, 21-61. Also see the *Times* obituary for Charley Pfaff, April 26, 1890. This stated that the 1855 location of Pfaff’s was 645 Broadway, but from 1860 to 1875 his “Chop House” was advertised at 653 Broadway. It also stated that by 1860 all the “lions,” the prominent writers, artists, musicians, journalists and men-about-town could be found there. Ada was described as the “lioness,” the “Reine de Boheme,” erratic, yet gifted.

Winter, 63-64; Parry, 21-61.


Parry, 24.


For more on Bohemian writers and connections with journalism see Parry, 57-59. Also Miller’s book is about Bohemians as the first true drama critics in America-- Henry Clapp, Jr., Ned Wilkins, and William Winter.

Winter, 62.

“ABB,” 98.


It was briefly revived in 1866.

Life and career of Thomas Bailey Aldrich in *OCAL*, 17-18. Winter, 132-146, has numerous references to Aldrich, a close friend, including his role in Bohemia, and his decision to leave it. Aldrich’s poem about Pfaff’s appeared in the *Press*, December 2, 1859.

Whitman probably came to Pfaff’s on and off from about 1858 until late 1862. He also had other compatible friends whom he visited like Abby Hill Price, at whose home he met social reformers and feminists. He admired them very much. See *Loving*, 215-216.

Winter, 140.

See notes for Chapter Two for biographical details on Whitman.

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Winter, 140.
Cast lists, descriptions of the production and reviews of Antony and Cleopatra in Odell, ANYS, VII: 111-112.

Information on actor Edwin Eddy and the Bowery Theatre that originally offered finer fare before the neighborhood changed and swankier theaters moved uptown in OCAT, 98 and 225.

Madame Elizabeth Ponisi (1818-1899) had a long, successful career in American theater after she and her husband came to America from England in 1850. She was very versatile, could play comedy and tragedy well, and appeared with some of the most noted players of her time. OCAT, 553.

Agreement to rent house to Ada and prepare house and garden plus lease in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.


Census of the United States, State of New York, Manhattan, June, 1860 on Microfilm Reel 653-821-22nd.Ward, pg.128, and Census of the United States, State of New Jersey, Atlantic County, Hammonton, August 7, 1870, pg. 178. There were no birth certificates or similar vital records in New York City in 1859. It was optional for parents to register births, and not many did. I have gone through this register twice and found no registration.

Ada Clare, “Little Children,” Era, June 19, 1864. In this article, she also made a plea for an end to child abuse. She noted that even animals’ rights not to be abused were beginning to be protected, but children lacked someone to ensure their rights would be protected.

After much discussion, S. Frederick Starr and I agreed to disagree. He believes that Aubrey was Gottschalk’s child, born before Ada left for Europe in January 1857. He believes that Aubrey was boarded out in America, and did not live with Ada again until she finally returned from Europe in November 1858. He discusses this in Bamboula, 244-246.

In “ABB”, 102 there is a garbled paragraph suggesting that Ada had an affair not only with Louis Moreau Gottschalk in America, but also with his brother Edward Gottschalk, a musician and a lawyer, in Paris. The rumor was that she secretly married Edward. Thereafter, according to Rawson, “Ada, for reasons not known to others, would never see her husband or speak his name … after the boy was born.” Rawson added that Ada’s friend Theodore Massett “remonstrated with the musician in behalf of Ada.” There is an unexplained payment of $75 to Theodore Massett by Ada at the end of June 1859 around the time I believe Aubrey was born. Payment to Massett for travelling expenses to bring the news of Aubrey’s birth to his natural father and beg him to acknowledge the child? We will never know. The payment is listed in Ada’s accounts with her lawyers, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

We already know that Ada queried her family lawyer about who would control her inheritance if she married before she inherited. (See Chapter Two.) In New York in 1859 the Married Woman’s Property Act was law, so Ada would not have had to relinquish her inheritance to someone she married. However it was customary for wives to let husbands handle their investments and other financial affairs. Even a staunch feminist like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who lobbied for the Married Woman’s Property Act and its amendments, upon inheriting $50,000 from her late father in 1859, gave the money to her husband Henry Stanton to invest. He did not manage it well. (See E. Griffith, In Her Own Right, 98, 161.)

Things were beginning to change by 1879. In Harvey Green’s The Light of the Home (Pantheon Books, 1983), on page 33 is a quote from The Household, April, 1879: “… no false modesty should prevent a (pregnant) woman from going out freely for the exercise she so much needs. If she respects herself, she will have the respect of all decent people … Of course a modest woman does not needlessly publish her sacred secret.” Ada’s 1859 pregnancy fell before this date, but even in 1879 pregnant women were cautioned against too much public exposure. Ada, though avant-garde, probably hid her pregnancy in public as much because she was vain about her figure as for any other reason.
Evidence of the many years she did go away are in her own letters and comments in her writing, ship lists, etc. Evidence she was home in summer 1859 is in correspondence with her attorneys in July and August and her notes to her lawyers, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

Zavarr and “Getty Gay” Wilmshurst appear on the 1860 New York Census list as living in Ada’s Forty-Second street household.

Details on Lizzie from Woman’s Who’s Who of America (New York: The American Commonwealth Company, 1914), 895, and family memoirs from the files of Robert Young, Jr., great-grandson of the Winters.

Information on William Winter from Young’s family files plus Miller, Chapter 4; William Winter, ‘mercurio’; and OCAT, 720.

Supposedly Ada was given this title either by a mock election, or by mutual agreement by the Pfaffians.


Ibid.

For a discussion of “The Tyranny of Housework” see Green, Light of the Home, Chapter 3.

Burnham called herself “M.H.B.” as New York correspondent for the St. Louis Republican in the 1870s. Her Feb. 15, 1874 column “Gotham Gossip” reminisced about Ada and the Bohemians, recalling Ada’s articles for the Saturday Press that attracted “considerable attention.” Burnham declared that because “William Winter and Henry Clapp were in the same house with the fair Ada,” and that afterwards “she never penned anything of consequence,” that Winter and “brilliant editor” Clapp probably wrote Ada’s work. In Wilfred Sheed’s biography of Clare Booth Luce, he called this sort of statement “the man under the bed” theory of women’s writing. There is more in Chapter 10 about other hurtful things Burnham wrote about Ada when she was ill and down on her luck.

Miller, 14-15.

Howells wrote novels, short stories, dramas, and criticism. He also served at various times as editor of the Atlantic Monthly and Harper’s. In his later years he became known as the preeminent man of letters of his time and place. Some of his most famous novels are The Rise of Silas Lapham (1885) and A Hazard of New Fortunes (1892). He encouraged and influenced authors like Stephen Crane and Frank Norris, and was an early champion of Realism who excelled at realistic character delineation. He was aware of the influence of social and economic forces on his characters. For biographical details see OCAT, 349-350.


William Page (1811-1885), portrait and figure painter would become President of the National Academy 1871-1874. In Ada’s day, his nudes aroused controversy because the American public wasn’t sure it was proper to exhibit paintings of nude subjects even if they were “high art” — thus Ada’s column was timely. Page is remembered today “as a colorist and leading exponent of figure painting among the American Romantics.” George Groce and David Wallace, New York Historical Society Dictionary of Artists in America 1564-1860, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957): 483.

PHH to RS, December 3, 1859, and February 14, 1860, in McKeithan, 3.

Details of Hayne’s literary career at this time in Moore, “PHH” Georgia Review 1968:106-124.

The quitclaim deed and other papers concerning the final settlement of the estates of Ada’s parents are in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC. The $2000 was probably not a final payoff to Ada by her family to “go and never darken their doors again.” It had been customary to finally settle an inheritance by paying a consideration of money in exchange for giving up any future claims against the estate. For all of Ada’s
family’s shock at her conduct, they never cut her off from what was hers by law in her inheritance, and they continued to take an interest in hearing about her. (Ada mentions corresponding with her sister from Paris in 1858, but no letters have been found.) Chapter Ten tells of an incident in 1873 when her cousin Paul Hayne, hearing she was ill, went North to try to help her and perhaps bring her home to the South, but she would not return.

311 Howells, 70.
312 Ibid, 72-74.
313 Ibid. However Howells admitted that this acquaintanceship with the Saturday Press and Pfaff’s was very brief, and when he knew Clapp later, he could give him credit for his kindness and support of new writers, and especially his support of Walt Whitman at a time he needed it badly.

Notes for Chapter 7
314 Information on Andrew Wheeler (1832-1903), later a well-known drama critic from Miller, Chapter Six, “Andrew C. Wheeler,” 128-158. Wheeler’s article in the Saturday Press, Nov. 10, 1860, was earlier published in The Philadelphia Dispatch — he was their New York correspondent.
315 Erminia Frezzolini (1818-1884) European opera singer, one of Verdi’s favorites, inspired ardent devotion wherever she went — In Havana her fans banded together and called themselves frezzolinistas. By 1860 she was past her prime, but her fame endured.
316 A mantle is a loose, sleeveless cloak: the height of fashion at that time.
317 Ibid, Press.
318 George Sand was the pseudonym of Amantine Aurore Dupin, Baronne Dudevant, prolific novelist and journalist. Among her many friends were the most influential writers, artists, and musicians of her time, and Alfred de Musset and Chopin were her lovers. Biographical details from Andre Maurois, Lelia, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953).
320 Mott, HO-AM, 164.
321 Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) was a poet, writer, and lecturer on social reform, particularly women’s suffrage and the abolition of slavery. She and her husband were editors of the Boston Commonwealth, an abolitionist newspaper. She is probably most well known today as the author of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” From OCAI, 348.
322 Mott, HO-AM, 163-164. Mrs. Howe’s comment on Sand is from her November 1861 review in the Atlantic Monthly. Mott considers Howe’s review one of the best on Sand and also cites Courant I: 23 (May 19, 1859).
326 Mott, HO-AM, 520-529. Mott considers it the very best of the comic papers.
327 Comments on the stimulating Sunday evenings at Ada’s with lists of her guests have been made by many friends and guests including Marie Howland, Lizzie Winter, Walt Whitman, and Rose Eytinge. Another guest was the journalist Albert Leighton Rawson who noted Ada’s “easy style of talk,” etc., listed her guests, and
told the anecdote about Whitman bringing impoverished women to Ada, and McWatters the kind policeman in “ABB.”

328 Marie Howland wrote details of Getty Gay’s death in Letter to E.C.S., April 21, 1907, CU SMC, ECS. Thomas Gunn, the journalist who took special interest in the doings of the Bohemians though he was spiteful in his comments, reported Getty Gay’s death around September 20, 1860 in his diary of September 30, 1860. From Thomas Butler Gunn, “Diaries”(MS), Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, vol.14, September 23 to December 30, 1860.

329 See at least 30 receipts for Ada’s money from her lawyers signed Zavarr Wilmshurst in files of Mitchell’s law firm record in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

330 Copy of lease and correspondence with Asten in Mitchell law firm records in AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

331 Details from Mrs. William (Lizzie) Winter, “Memoranda for Billy” short undated reminiscences (c.1908) in files of Robert E. Young, Jr., Winters’ great-grandson, Sacramento, California.

332 Details about Ada and Ballard’s trip to Cuba with Ada in AC (AAM) Caroliniana, USC. and ship departures and arrival lists January and March, 1861 Times — also in MH to ECS, April 21, 1907, CUSMC, ECS, and “ABB,” 103.

333 Ibid. MH to ECS.


335 Details of events leading up to the war from the Times, late 1860 and early 1861.

336 Though Ada travelled alone when she first came to New York, and to Europe twice, she may have bowed to custom by taking Ballard as a companion to Cuba, where, as Julia Ward Howe noted, it was often difficult for a woman tourist alone to venture out on her own. Ada also showed generosity by taking Ballard who could not afford the trip herself.

337 Howe, 44-45.

338 Ibid, 116-117.

339 Ibid.


341 Dana, 30.

342 Gottschalk’s comment on Cuban audiences and their responses to him, LMG: NOP, Behrend, page xxxi of “Prelude.”


344 In La Prensa de la Habana, February 25, 1861 cited by Rubin.

345 Both Dana and Howe often mentioned LeGrand’s as a tourist mecca, and Dana wrote more about the opera company’s presence at LeGrand’s in To Cuba and Back, 15-16.

346 According to Behrend: “The presence of Ada Clare at this time must have been disturbing to Gottschalk.” LMG: NOP, Behrend, 30. The April 17 concert was a fiasco, and Gaceta de la Habana suggested there were problems of ensemble and lack of rehearsal.
Rubin, Ibid. Inter-American Music Bulletin. Rubin’s remarks summarized her article.

General background information on the Civil War from James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era (Oxford University Press, 1988)


Howland recalled Ada’s feelings many times in written reminiscences. Long after Ada’s death, Howland received a letter from William H. Hayne (son of Ada’s cousin, the poet, Paul Hamilton Hayne) February 16, 1897, that confirms the family’s shame. Answering Marie’s request for information from Ada’s family in order to write a biography of Ada, Hayne said that as a child he heard Ada had run away from home, and her subsequent life was “sad and deplorable … her erratic conduct was a great grief to my grandmother (Ada’s aunt Emily Hayne) and father.” He disapproved of bringing facts of Ada’s life before the public. Marie abandoned the project because she was writing another novel and moving around a lot, not because of Hayne’s disapproval. However, in that same letter Hayne recalled his father personally trying to help a troubled Ada in New York in 1873 — see Chapter 10 for details.

AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

Ibid. Records of Ada’s expenditures, 1855-1864. Wartime inflation was rampant in the South diminishing income from Ada’s investments.

Impresario Maurice Strakosch (1825-1887) was also a composer and pianist. He sometimes performed in all three roles, as in a September 1, 1853 concert with Norwegian violinist Ole Bull and famed soprano Adelina Patti. He was married to Amalia Patti, Adelina’s sister and successfully managed many musicians. From Lawrence, 290-292, 429.

Starr, 308-309.


Eyewitness account of death of Ned Wilkins in Winter, 86-87. George Arnold’s comments from Miller, 68.

Parry, 41-42.

The fullest account of O’Brien’s army service and death is in Francis Wolle, Fitz-James O’Brien: A Literary Bohemian of the 1850s. A briefer account is in Winter, 76-78. Winter later collected, edited, and published O’Brien’s short stories; today there is renewed interest in his stories of fantasy and science fiction.

Information on the Winters during this period from Miller, 78-79, and Lizzie Winter, “Memoranda for Billy,” in the files of Robert Young, Jr., Sacramento, California.

AC to W and LW, November 18,1861; Young.

Mott, HOAM, described the Albion as “a New York weekly devoted chiefly to the reprinting of articles from English journals.” He also notes it was not very loyal to the North during the Civil War. As was common it used British material without payment. Winter started a literary column in the Albion as well as his own drama column. However, in order to make a living, Winter also contributed to many magazines and newspapers.

AC to WW, December, 1861, Charles E. Feinberg Collection of Walt Whitman in Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Hereafter Feinberg-Whitman Coll., LOC. At the end of 1861 Ada was still spending money freely, for she mentions to Willie that her friend, Anna Mary Freeman Goldbeck was spending a few days with her and she was “sitting to her for my miniature.”
Details about Clancy and the Leader from Leader 1862-1865. A good discussion of it as a Democratic party paper plus the position of New York newspapers in general toward the war is in Frost, “Home Front,” 276. McPherson, Battle Cry, 506, has a good discussion of the War Democrats and Peace Democrats and the divisiveness that directly influenced Democratic-dominated New York politics, and the Leader newspaper during the Civil War. Many of these New York papers including the Leader were read beyond the New York area. Ada’s work in the Leader, though not political, was also reprinted outside the New York area.

LMG: NOP, Behrend, 43-45. His diary also gives accounts of his tours in the U.S.A. during the Civil War, his programs, audience requests at certain performances, and what notables were in the audience. Also see Starr, Chapter XX, “The Union, 1862,” 310-329.

Just how close Clapp and Gottschalk were is recounted in Clapp’s tribute in the Leader following Gottschalk’s death in 1869. Clara Gottschalk Petersen, Gottschalk’s sister thought this important enough to include at the end of the first version of NOP that she edited.

Stoddard, QOB.


Leader, April 19, 1862.

Ibid. October 11, 1862. Booth excelled in his Shakespearean roles, and preferred those roles when he had his own theater company.

Ibid. Lizzie Winter.

In files, AC (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

Description of the LaFarge House Hotel and the fight in the lobby connecting to the theater in Floyd-Jones, Backward Glances, 102.

As reported in Ada Clare’s obituary by an unknown writer, though clearly someone who knew her quite well, in March 15, 1874 New York Clipper.

The Times covered the trial October 16 and duration of the trial, 1862.

Leader, October 18, 1862.

Ibid.

Gottschalk’s efforts in training and sponsoring Teresa Carreno (1853-1917) as well as reactions to her 1862 concerts in U.S.A. in LMG: NOP, Behrend, 91 and Starr, 326. She would become one of the century’s outstanding pianists, and always championed and played Gottschalk’s music.

Starr records in footnote 34, page 510, to Chapter 20 of Bamboula that Ada’s article “The Male Beauties” that mentions Gottschalk is in his Scrapbook no.4, Gottschalk Collection, New York Public Library.

Mott, vol. 2: 528.


Ibid. Lizzie Winter.


LMG: NOP, Behrend, 133-142. Gottschalk’s colorful description of this event was eventually reprinted in several publications.
Details on Marie, Countess d’Agoult, her friendship with George Sand, and her relationship with Liszt (she left her husband to live with him) in Maurois, *Lelia*, 207-210, 221-225, and 228-233. Sand made up nicknames for herself, Liszt, Madame d’Agoult and everyone in their entourage (223) traveling together through Europe in 1836. Madame d’Agoult’s soubriquet was Arabella. Another in their party, Adolphe Pictet, wrote a satirical book about the trip, introducing their escapades and their nicknames to the public. The Countess and Ada were both “Queens” of an artistic group of writers that gathered in their homes, and both were willing to risk social ostracism to lead their own lives.

In legal records *AC* (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

These photographs are now in the Photograph Collection of The Bancroft Library; University of California at Berkeley; Berkeley, California, donated by Charles Warren Stoddard. See the next chapter for Stoddard’s close friendship and travels to Hawaii with Ada and Aubrey.

MHUM, 37.

Stoddard, *QOB*, 638. This article is illustrated with the photographs of Ada and Aubrey mentioned above.

*Notes for Chapter 8*

Writings of members of Pfaff’s Circle, news of their activities in New York, as well as their writing about their visits to California appeared in the *Era* particularly during 1863 and 1864. Among the visitors were Charles Henry Webb, Charles Farrar Browne (Artemus Ward), Fitzhugh Ludlow and Adah Isaacs Menken.

Discussions of the growth of San Francisco, and how this affected literary journals and their audiences in 1860s in Walker, 11-14.

*Era*, Ada Clare’s first column, “Coming Out,” March 20, 1864. All of Ada’s articles were reprinted in the *Leader*.

*AC* to her lawyers C and J.W.M., February 2, 1864 in *AC* (AAM), Caroliniana, USC.

General background on travel and passengers on the Panama Route from John Haskell Kemble, *The Panama Route 1848-1869* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1943), Chapter VI “The Voyage” 146-166, and Chapter VIII “Significance of the Panama Route” 200-212.

All of Ada’s descriptions of this voyage are from *Era*.


Walker, 11-14.


*The Golden Era* was a literary weekly more than a newspaper. Founded in 1852 by Roland Daggett and J. Ford, it originally featured sketches of mining life with “reckless” dramatic criticism too: after Lawrence bought it (in partnership with James Brooks), he developed many new young writers who later became famous. Another literary periodical started in the ’50s was the *Pioneer or California Monthly Magazine* modeled on the old *Knickerbocker* periodical, and claiming to be the first purely literary periodical in the West. It published four semi-annual volumes. Details from Mott, vol. 2, 117.

Walker, 122. The *Era* also carried a variety of advertisements.
Biographical information on Francis Brett Harte — (he eventually dropped his first name as well as the “t” from his middle name) is from OCAL, 317, and George R. Stewart, Bret Harte: Argonaut and Exile, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931). Details of his life as a Western writer are in Walker, and in James D. Hart, “Bret Harte at 150” (on the occasion of an exhibition by that name of Bret Harte’s work at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley, California), Bancroftiana No. 93, January 1987, 6-7. Hart feels that Bret Harte was the inventor of the genre of local color tales, and this kind of short story subsequently proliferated.


Mark Twain was born Samuel Clemens, and did not take the pen name of Mark Twain permanently until February 1863, so looking him up in references sometimes involves looking under Clemens. Ada wrote about him as Mark Twain in 1864. Biographical information is under Samuel Clemens in OCAL, 148-150. Good biographical information on Twain out west is in John Lauber, The Making of Mark Twain (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), especially the chapters: “Reporter,” “Bohemian,” and “Correspondent.” Also Twain’s autobiographical Roughing It, in the edition edited by Harriet Elinor Smith and Edgar Branch (Berkeley: University of California Press-Publication of the Mark Twain Project of the Bancroft Library, 1995) is invaluable for Twain’s version of life in Virginia City, San Francisco, and Hawaii in the 1860s. Hereafter Roughing It. Another book about Twain in California, and his Bohemian connections there is Nigey Lennon, The Sagebrush Bohemian: Mark Twain in California, (New York: Paragon House, 1990).

Lucius Beebe, Comstock Commotion: The Story of the Territorial Enterprise (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1954) gives a lively history of the paper. Very few original copies of the original Virginia City Territorial Enterprise survive due to fire and attrition. Some of Twain’s articles are available that were reprinted at the time in other papers in Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain), Early Tales and Sketches, Vols. 1 and 2, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1979, 1981) and Henry N. Smith and Frederick Anderson, eds. Mark Twain of the Enterprise, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1957).

Details of Menken’s theatrical triumphs, marital tribulations, and friendship with Ada and other writers out west from Allen Lesser, Enchanting Rebel (The Beechhurst Press, 1947): 115-129. Also see Walker, 166-175.

Biographical details of Robert Newell (1836-1901), journalist and humorist, are from OCAL, 538. “Orpheus C. Kerr” was a pun on “office seeker.” It was suggested by the mob seeking political jobs in Lincoln’s administration.


Ibid, “Fashions.”

Ibid. “Robinson’s Gymnasium,” June 19, 1864. Dr. Dio Lewis had originated this new system of calisthenics for men and women.


She reviewed amusements almost every week from March 1864 until July 1864. The stories of all except Uncle Tom’s Cabin are unfamiliar today, although they were long running hits of mid-nineteenth century American theater. Rosedale or The Rifle Ball, produced and adapted by Lester Wallack, was a complicated action-filled melodrama involving wills, kidnapped babies, and a love affair that works out in the end. Leah the Forsaken by Augustin Daly was about love between Jews and Gentiles against the laws in 17th century
Germany. The Jewish heroine Leah is betrayed by her Gentile sweetheart, and he makes amends too late, as she is dying. *Toodles*, a farce produced and written by William Burton, was a rewrite of an old play adding the comic element of a wife who can’t stop buying at auction, and a drunken husband who discourages her by buying a coffin at auction. *Serious Family*, another Burton production, was a rewrite of a popular French play. It was about the triumph of young love over Aminadah Sleek, a cowardly spouter of pious sentiments — one of Burton’s most famous roles. These plays were variously written, adapted, and produced by Lester Wallack, Augustin Daly, and William Burton, who were among the most successful actor-managers of their day.

Information from OCAT.

416 Ibid., 454, for biographical information on Tom Maguire.

417 This song was probably kin to other popular songs of the Civil War period like “The Vacant Chair,” and “Just Before the Battle, Mother.”


419 *Era*, 1864.

420 Ibid., “Maguire’s Opera House,” April 10, 1864.


422 Ibid.

423 A good description of travel from San Francisco to Virginia City is in George D. Lyman, *The Saga of the Comstock Lode* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1934), Chapter X, “Rush to Washoe — 1859-1863,” 60-69. The only thing missing is Ada’s “short journey on the cars.” It was not until 1864 that Central Pacific had built a few miles of track. Also, stage, riverboat, and railroad ads in the *Era* and *San Francisco Bulletin* give details about the route.


425 Information on Virginia City from Lyman, *Comstock Lode*; Walker, and Smith and Branch eds., Twain, *Roughing It*.

426 Walker, 92.

427 Ibid., 93.

428 Ibid., “Washoe Wanderings”

429 *Roughing It*, 283.

430 Ibid., “Washoe Wanderings,”

431 Biographical information on de Quille (Wright) from OCAT, 95-196. Twain published Wright’s *History of the Big Bonanza* in 1876.

432 Ibid., “Washoe Wanderings”

433 Ibid.

434 Ada Clare to the Editors of the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, April 1864, from Mark Twain Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley California courtesy of William Wright Papers (Morris Family Collection) at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

435 Ibid., “Henness Pass,”


437 Walker’s few exceptions include Ina Coolbrith, later poet laureate of California, and Frances Fuller Victor who eventually wrote history books for Bancroft’s vast “History of the West” project. Discussion of California’s early women writers is beyond the scope of this book, but judging from my own reading of the
Era, the level of the women’s writing was at least as good as the level of the men’s writing. Walker notes that some of the promising early women writers retired and very sensibly (in his words) put their efforts toward being wives and mothers. My opinion is these women writers did not have time for the long, long apprenticeships that Bret Harte and Mark Twain served that improved their writing. Walker’s book is outstanding, but it lacks a balanced appraisal of women writers of the 1850s and 1860s, though his biographical facts are accurate.


439 Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations identifies this as from Byron’s English Bards and Scotch Reviewers (1809), 1,75.

440 Walker, 182.

441 Ibid., 178-200.

442 Ina Coolbrith (1842-1928), a distinguished California woman-of-letters, was the state’s first Poet Laureate. She came to California in a covered wagon, and after 1865 settled in the Bay Area and helped Bret Harte edit the Overland Monthly. She was a tremendous literary influence, first through her association with Twain, Harte, Stoddard, and Joaquin Miller; later she did many things to promote rising young authors, especially in her work at the Oakland Public Library. She welcomed authors to her own literary circle, and organized a World Congress of Authors for the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

443 Era, “My First Views of California,” March 20, 1864. The word “cradle” denotes both an infant’s bed, usually on rockers, and a box-like device with rockers the miners used for washing dirt to remove gold particles.

444 Could her fellow writers have been teasing her by writing these letters? Probably.


446 Ada’s review of Mrs. Winn’s performance in Camille at the Metropolitan Theater was in the March 20 Era and the Era’s scolding of hostile critics of Ada’s review appeared April 3, 1864. Feelings and loyalties among newspaper editorialists about the Civil War were complex and sometimes changed, as reported in Walker, 109-114. Before Lincoln was elected, there were more Southern sympathizers. Then as war was declared and progressed, more editors were loyal to the Union. Yet there was what Walker called “the more persistent campaign of the minority opposition. . .with veiled or even open pleas for the Confederacy.”


Notes for Chapter 9

448 Details of Ada’s voyage come from her first article for the S.F. Bull., “The Voyage,” August 13, 1864 and Walter Leman, Memories of An Old Actor (San Francisco: A. Roman Co., Publishers, 1886), 307-308. Onward’s passenger list on arrival in Honolulu in Pacific Commercial Advertiser, August 6, 1864, included Mrs. Ada Clare and Master Aubrey Clare as well as the western actor Walter Leman.

449 Descriptions of Hawaiian Independence Day, the pa’u riders, Honolulu, and local fashions are also in Ada’s first article for the S.F. Bull., August 13, 1864. The rider’s costume Ada described was a version of native female dress called the pa’u — a large piece of fabric worn wrapped around the waist and hips. After native dress was discouraged by American missionaries, fully dressed women riders would wrap the pa’u around their waists and legs trailing streamers as they galloped around, often to celebrate a festive occasion.

450 *S.F. Bull*, August 13, 1864.

451 Ibid.

452 Ibid.

453 *Roughing It*, 454.

454 Because the volcano is a shield volcano, even though it is constantly active it is possible to observe most of its activity at fairly close range, except during an extensive lava flow. Today it is part of the United States National Park System.

455 Ada’s description of the discomforts of her voyage to Hilo and trip to the volcano are from her travel letter in *S.F. Bull*, August 31, 1864, and Leman’s version of the trip is from Leman, *Memories*, 309-313. Leman admired Ada for being sensible enough to ride astride as the native women did. Details of other ways women ascended the volcano and their borrowed bloomers are described in Lady Jane Franklin’s diary in 1861 quoted in Alfons L. Korn, *The Victorian Visitors* (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1958), Chapter Two. As for Ada’s prolonged bouts of seasickness — she was used to travel on steamships, and not on small sailing vessels. There was no steam navigation either to or from Hawaii, or on inter-island routes at that time. Even today, inter-island travel even on a large cruise ship can be very turbulent. The waves north of O’ahu, in particular, are among the largest in the world.

456 *S.F. Bull*, August 31, 1864.

457 Ibid.

458 Ibid.


460 *S.F. Bull*, August 31, 1864.

461 Ada’s description of Hilo, leaving Hilo, her stormy voyage, and her stay at a sugar plantation are in the *S.F. Bull*, September 14, 1864. Sugar began to replace whaling as the chief industry of Hawaii in the 1860s, especially during the Civil War when sugar was in great demand in the U.S. and prices were high.

462 Ibid.


464 Ibid, September 14, 1864.

465 Stoddard arrived in Honolulu on the *Yankee*, August 27, 1864, as noted in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* the next week.

466 *S.F. Bull*, September 14, 1864, published Ada’s description of her typical day.

467 Stoddard, *Exits and Entrances*, 128. Ada is probably “Fair Anonymous” in Chapter XIV of Stoddard’s *Hawaiian Life*. That chapter is a brief reminiscence of walks and sightseeing they did in Honolulu.

468 *S. F. Bull*, September 14, 1864.


472 Ibid.

473 Ibid.
Biographical sketch of Robert Crichton Wyllie (1798-1865) is from Korn, *Victorian Visitors*, 292-295. He is prominently mentioned throughout the book, which deals with the visit of Lady Jane Franklin and her niece to Hawaii and their close friendship with Wyllie and the royal family. The book, based on the diaries and letters of the women with notes by Korn that provide a good history of Hawaii, gives a marvelous picture of Hawaii in 1861. Of course the comments of Franklin and her niece are colored by British upper class perceptions. Concise biographical facts on Wyllie are in James D. Raeside, “The Journals and Letter Books of R.C. Wyllie: A Minor Historical Mystery,” *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, vol. 18 (1984): 87-89. Though Wyllie’s official papers are voluminous, most of his personal papers and diaries are missing. Probably no letters between Wyllie and Ada survive. Stoddard, in *Entrances and Exits*, “In Old Hawaii” tells briefly of Wyllie’s life, and concentrates on his friendship with Ada, comparing it to Wyllie’s friendships with Lady Jane Franklin.

Korn, *Victorian Visitors*, and Raeside, "Journals of Wyllie."

Gavin Daws, “The Decline of Puritanism at Honolulu in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Hawaiian History*, 1 (1967): 31-39. Daws describes foreign minister Wyllie’s influence on Hawaiian court life encouraging the monarchs to enjoy the social graces at the palace, particularly dancing, which the Puritanical missionaries shunned. On page 34, Daws writes of the missionaries attending palace dinners where courtesy dictated they had to appear, but their departure before dancing began. One missionary complained that Wyllie, who loved to dance, “could hardly wait until they were out of the room.”

Sherman occupied Atlanta on September 2, 1864 after General Hood had withdrawn the day before. It took some time for this news to reach Hawai‘i.


Longtin, *Three Writers*, 123.

*S.F. Bull.*, “Life and Manners in the Sandwich Islands,” November 11, 1864. This was the last of her four columns, but she may have written more. Part of the newspaper’s file from August to November 1864, when Ada was in Hawaii, no longer survives.

Ibid.

Ibid.

The Pacific Commercial Advertiser had a series of articles from summer into early fall, 1864, covering the Constitutional Convention, and harshly criticizing Wyllie’s part in it.

Ibid., November 11, 1864.

Description of the royal palace and court life from Korn, *Victorian Visitors*, Chapter Two.

Ada’s trip to the royal palace, a picnic at Waikiki Beach, and final comments on Hawaii all appear in S.F. *Bull*, November 11, 1864. Taro was a plant akin to the sweet potato that was the chief food plant of the natives. They used all parts of it, and made *poi* by pounding steamed and boiled taro roots into a paste.

Ada may have been green with envy to learn that Lady Jane Franklin had been given a feather cape by the King himself. It was probably given to her because she was an unofficial diplomatic representative of Great Britain even though she had come on a pleasure trip. This cape was later displayed at the London Exhibition of 1862. Some of the royal feather capes that Ada admired are on display today at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu.

Ibid., November 11, 1864.

Ibid.
Stoddard, *Entrances and Exits*, 128-129. At the end of November 1864 the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* noted the departure of the bark *Eldridge* for San Francisco, November 26. On the passenger list were Miss Ada Clare, Master Clare, and C.W. Stoddard.

**Notes for Chapter 10**

491 *Era*, December 25, 1864.

492 The heroine of the novel is named Marguerite Gautier, and the opera’s heroine is named Marguerite. In the play, the heroine’s name is changed to Camille.

493 Ada’s fall from acceptable standards of conduct for a lady was double: not only did she have a sexual life without being married, but she raised her illegitimate child openly without shame.

494 Stoddard wrote about her disastrous performance in *QOB*, 641. The *Era* had a roundup of all the reviews from other papers as well as its own on January 1, 1865.

495 Stoddard, *QOB*, 641.

496 Ibid.

497 *Era*, January 1, 1865. Mark Twain may have been among her reviewers. *Dramatic Chronicle* was among his many writing jobs. Twain and Ada had also continued their friendship.

498 Stoddard, *QOB*, 642.

499 Walker, 175.

500 *Era*, January 15, 1865 told of their departure.

501 Ada’s account of her voyage home “From California” appeared in the *Leader* the end of February, 1865.

502 Ada and Aubrey arrived in New York City. February 12, 1865, according to ship arrival lists of passengers in the *Times* and records of the Port of New York.

**Notes for Chapter 11**

503 Details of the last days and ending of the Civil War from the *Times* and *Leader*, March to April, 1865.

504 Ibid. Details of entertainment in New York.

505 Lizzie Winter, “Memoranda for Billy.” Details on the careers of the Winters from Miller, Ch. 4, “William Winter.”


507 *Press*, January 27, 1866.

508 Ibid, August 5, 1865.

509 He also was a clerk in the Indian Affairs office, and later had a job in the Attorney General’s office. He occasionally visited the Brooklyn-New York area.

510 For details on the *Round Table*, see Mott, *HOAM*, vol.3, (1865-1885): 319-324. Other members of the Bohemian circle who wrote for it early on were William Winter, George Arnold, and Charles Dawson Shanly. They were not responsible for attacks on Bohemia. However, an important editor was Richard Henry Stoddard. He and his wife, the writer Elizabeth Stoddard had always disapproved of the Bohemian group.

511 *Leader*, April 22, 1865. Note the phrases “handsome pianist,” no doubt Gottschalk, and “orient-eyed tragedian,” undoubtedly Edwin Booth.
Details on Ada’s grandfather Hugh Wilson’s death in 1864 at his Barnwell plantation after fleeing Union forces, from Dr. G. Fraser Wilson, a descendant of Hugh Wilson, of Charleston, South Carolina; Paul H. Hayne and his family from Moore, “Paul Hamilton Hayne,” The Georgia Review; Eugene McElhenney’s post-war hard times detailed in his own letters, and the daily diaries of Edward McCrady, Sr., both in McCrady Papers, SCHS.

That evening Laura Keene and her company were performing Our American Cousin which had had been one of her company’s most popular plays for many years. After the assassin shot the President and escaped, Keene went to try to assist Mrs. Lincoln in their private box. As others were trying to revive Lincoln, the actress held his head in her lap, and bathed his temples with water she had brought up from backstage.


517 It is in the Library of the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

518 Another impetus for the book may have been the scandal and subsequent trial that grew out of the adulterous love affair between Henry Ward Beecher, the idolized preacher of Brooklyn’s Plymouth Church (the most influential in the country) with Elizabeth Richards “Lib” Tilton, wife of Theodore Tilton. Eventually Tilton (an adulterer himself), sued Beecher for alienation of affections. The trial lasted 6 months in 1875, and became a spectacle. “Lib” was a brunette.

519 Stoddard, QOB, Whitman-Feinberg Collection, LOC.

520 The New York Weekly Review was a good critical paper reviewing music, and publishing stories, essays, and poetry by American writers, with excerpts from foreign writers. Zavarr was only editor for a short time, and Clapp and Winter also wrote for it. It had started as a musical review, and changed titles with “disturbing frequency” according to Mott, HOAM, vol.2:197.

521 The “Condensed Novels” were not collected and published as a book until 1867. They were satirical parodies of famous literary works, many originally published in the Era. As for Ada calling Harte “Frank,” all of Harte’s closest friends called him that, since his original name had been Francis Brett Harte.

522 Stoddard, QOB, Whitman-Feinberg LOC.

523 One of the “Condensed Novels,” a parody of Victor Hugo’s Fantine, appeared in the Press December 9, 1865.

524 Artemus Ward originally requested that Twain, still in California, send him a story to be included in Ward’s book to be published by Carleton, the publisher. Twain sent the “jumping frog” too late for Ward’s book, but Carleton turned it over to Henry Clapp for the Press. There was always a close relationship between Carleton and the Bohemians.

525 Details on the “Josh Billings” pseudonym of Henry Wheeler Shaw (1818-1885), from OCA, 684. He was a popular lecturer and writer. His first Josh Billings book was published in 1865, and others soon followed. He was a “cracker barrel philosopher” and his humorous style included silly spellings, “deformed grammar, . . . puns, malapropisms, incongruous juxtaposition of idea, and anticlimax.” His style was noted for aphorisms typical of certain popular humorists of the day. For example in a column, January 20, 1866 his “sayings of Josh Billings” was a column on “the very convenient doctrine ov predestinashun,” I am indebted to Lalor, 113, for this reference.


527 S. Frederick Starr in Bamboula names a letter as the “key archival document” for what happened. Gottschalk wrote the letter to Chickering, the manufacturer of the pianos the musician used and endorsed. It


530 Arnold’s progressive, paralyzing illness may have been an advanced stage of syphilis. Bohemia’s enemies were quick to suggest his illness was a result of too much dissolute living and alcohol.

531 Clapp wrote for the *Leader* from 1861 until 1869.

532 Parry, 47.

533 *Leader*, September 2, 1865.

534 *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* by Oliver Wendell Holmes was published in 1861. It had been first serialized as *The Professor’s Story*.


536 There is an excellent overview of the growth of American publishing in the nineteenth century and the success of best-selling women novelists like Fanny Fern, Augusta Evans Wilson, and others in Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage*, Chapter I: “The Fanny Fern.” Also see Coultrap-McQuin, *Doing Literary Business*, pg. 2 for financial success of women writers; the rest of the book for women writers struggling with publishers to be paid what they were worth.

537 *Leader*, September 2, 1865.

538 Ada Clare, *Only a Woman’s Heart* (New York: M. Doolady, 1866). It was published in April, 1866. Hereafter, *OAWH*. The book is in Lyle Wright, *Bibliography of American Fiction, 1851-1875*, published at San Marino by the Huntington Library in 1965 and 1969. It is available on microfilm at some university libraries, and on microfilm from Wright Series, Glen Rock, New Jersey, Research Publications; and the series is on microfiche from Louisville, Kentucky: Lost Cause Press. The Union Catalog of pre-1953 imprints has the location of hardcover copies. Luisa Cetti, a Milan, Italy scholar of radical mid-nineteenth century American women has written an excellent perceptive article on *OAWH*: “Anatomy of a Literary Fiasco: Ada Clare’s *Only a Woman’s Heart* (1866)” in English manuscript. Published in Italy as *Anatomia di un fiasco letterario: Only a Woman’s Heart* (1866) di Ada Clare in ACOMA, *institut international di studi nordamericani*, 13 (primavere 1998), V.

539 Stoddard, *QOB*, 640.

540 *OAWH*, 23

541 *Ibid.*, 77-78.


546 *OAWH*, 203. Parts of this somewhat altered from the Bible.


Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America 1820-1870*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 26. Baym makes the point that the traditions of what happened to the seduced heroine in eighteenth century novels like Samuel Richardson’s (carried on in America by Susanna Rowson) were not continued by American women novelists after the 1830s. “The heroine who lived entirely in her feelings was, to their minds, a fool and a pernicious example to young women starting out in their battle with life.” Baym, 25-26.


The (anonymous) review of Ada’s novel appeared in the “Library Table” column in the May 19, 1866 issue of *The Round Table*, 308-309. Details on the magazine from Mott, vol. 2, 319-324.

Augusta Evans Wilson incorporated details of the life of a woman writer in two of her popular novels, *Beulah* (1859) and *St. Elmo* (1866). So did Fanny Fern in *Ruth Hall* (1855).

Ada’s colleague and friend Charles Henry Webb wrote a parody of Augusta Evans Wilson’s *St Elmo* (1866), one of the top sellers of the day. Webb’s book came out in 1867 and was called *St. Twelve'mo*. Critics had complained that Wilson’s heroine was too scholarly, always displaying esoteric knowledge. In Webb’s book, the reason for that is that the heroine has swallowed an unabridged dictionary. See Freibert and White, eds., *Hidden Hands*, 85.

*Times*, May 1, 1866, 4.

Along with raising five children, Lizzie Winter acted with the companies of Edwin Booth, Augustin Daly, and Lester Wallack in the late 1860s and 1870s. She also adapted plays for Helena Modjeska and Richard Mansfield, and wrote many short stories and several novels under a pseudonym.

Details of summer 1866, in MHUM, 43-47.

Their son Frank E. Noyes was born in 1881 in New York City, where Aubrey pursued a career as an actor. Aubrey Clare had taken the name Aubrey C. Noyes when Ada married actor-manager Frank A. Noyes in 1869. See Chapter 9 for more details of the Noyes’ marriage and stage career together.
Description of the Howlands’ life in New York and subsequent move to Hammonton, New Jersey is in Gaston, 39-40.

This incident recorded in H.B. Phelps, Players of a Century: Record of the Albany Stage (Providence: Rhode Island News Company, 1880), 362-363.

AC to CWS, Fall, 1866, Stoddard, QOB, 644-645, full text of letter in Whitman-Feinberg Collection, LOC.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Stoddard, QOB.

Notes for Chapter 12

Details from the biography of Edward Howland in “Harvard Class of 1853,” and MHUM. Ray Reynolds of San Diego, author of Cat’s Paw Utopia, a book about the Howlands helping found a colony in Mexico in the 1890s has generously shared information from his files about the Howlands in Hammonton. Information also comes from the Hammonton Historical Society, some of it compiled by J.G. Wilson. The South Jersey Republican featured many ads enticing people to buy real estate there: it was within commuting distance of Philadelphia, and it was the beginning of the era of extended local transportation lines allowing people to live farther away from the cities where they worked.

Charles Warren Stoddard quoted from this letter, QOB, 644. The original of this letter, A.C. to C.W.S., December 2, 1866 is in the Whitman-Feinberg Collection, LOC.


This incident from April 1866 is described in George O. Willard, History of the Providence Stage, (Providence: Rhode Island News Company, 1891), 175-176.

Memphis, Tennessee surrendered to Union forces, May 1862. Details from McPherson, 418. Information on events in Memphis late 1866, early 1867 as well as entertainment and theater advertisements from Memphis Daily Appeal of that time.


Charles Kean (1811-1868) and Mrs. Kean (Ellen Tree 1805-1880) were well-known English actors successfully touring America several times. They played a variety of roles, both tragic and comic. He was the son of Edmund Kean, one of England’s most distinguished tragic actors. Many critics felt the son as talented as his father. “Charles Kean,” 394, and “Ellen Tree” Kean, 676, in OCAT.

Adelaide Ristori (1822-1906) was an internationally famous Italian tragic actress. She made several American tours, the first in 1866. Handsome rather than beautiful, Ristori excelled in the power and grandeur of her acting, rather than subtlety. From OCAT, 579.
Dion Boucicault’s play was first produced in New York in 1865, and was a runaway hit full of what the critics called “sensations.” The public loved it and it was revived often over the next forty years. Details from OCAT, 38.

A.C. to W.S., January 6, 1867.

Blanche was the daughter of Edwin Booth’s oldest brother, actor Junius Booth, from his first marriage to actress Clementine De Bar whom he deserted. Blanche was adopted, raised, and trained to be an actress by her uncle Ben De Bar, a prominent theater manager in New Orleans and St. Louis. She was also close to her Booth uncles, Edwin and John. Interesting material about Ben and Blanche De Bar as known Southern sympathizers close to John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Lincoln, and how they were scrutinized by the government after the assassination to Lincoln is in Kimmel, 373-375.

A.C. to W.S. March 25, 1867.

From New York Clipper, November 29, 1867.

The Clipper started out as a sporting and theatrical news journal with other miscellaneous pieces in 1853. Then it became, as Mott said, “the great news journal of professional performers on the stage, in circus rings, and on athletic fields.” and thus remained until the 1880s. It changed, and eventually deteriorated by the time Variety bought it in 1923. Mott, vol. 2, 202-204.

Clipper, November 29, 1867.

Biographical information from Noah Ludlow, Dramatic Life as I Found It, 634-635.

Background on all the following information on theater in southeastern Texas during the late 1860s, especially noting the contribution of the Greenwalls from Joseph Gallegly, Footlights on the Border: The Galveston and Houston Stage Before 1900 (Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1962) 170-171.

Clipper, March 30, 1868 mentions the impact of “hard times” on the theater. Subsequent issues have details of the tour by Crisp’s smaller company in spring and early summer of 1868.

Almost all biographical information on Frank is from his July 13, 1878 obituary (newspaper unidentified) in the HTC. Given references in the obit to “the profession,” ie: the acting profession, the newspaper is probably the Clipper. It includes almost all the details of his acting career from 1867-1874. Description of the National Theatre of Boston during Frank’s apprenticeship and the importance of the stage manager are from Durham (ed.), American Theater Companies, 1749-1887, “National Theatre Company Boston”. The book also includes a chapter on the Academy of Music theater company in Cleveland.


Clipper, September 1867, reported Frank’s shooting coming so soon after he had successfully opened the Omaha theater season.

Lotta Crabtree (1847-1924), American born actress, was one of the most financially successful (when she died, her estate was worth four million dollars) and universally loved performers of her time. As a child in California she entertained the gold miners with her songs and dances, subsequently appearing in plays. Her New York debut was in 1864, and one of her most famous roles was as Little Nell in John Brougham’s dramatization of The Old Curiosity Shop by Dickens. She played mostly melodramatic roles that she enlivened with her dancing and bright repartee. She even played the banjo. She was so popular she was immortalized as “Our Little Lotta” in her portrait on the “Actress” pattern of pattern glass, the mass-produced glass of the day.

Clipper, December 9, 1867 reported Frank’s accident and Lotta’s actions.

MHUM, 49.
Clipper, September 26, 1868 announced: “Mated-Miss Agnes Stanfield, better known in the literary world as Ada Clare, was married on September 9 to J.F. Noyes, manager of the theater at Bryan City, Texas.

Affie Chesley Brown, niece of Ada’s friend Marie Howland, wrote this information to Albert Parry who included it in the Addenda to the revised second edition of Garrets and Pretenders published by Dover in 1960.

According to the details of Ada’s will made in 1870.

Clipper, September 7, 1868 reported the new Bryan City theater was ready to open under management of Frank Noyes and G. Miller, and seemed to offer permanence. The theater season from September to November, 1868, is all reported in the Clipper.

Information on the Greenwall companies as well as Ada and Frank’s appearances with them from December, 1868 to February, 1869 in Gallegly, 84-85; Galveston Daily News and Flake’s Daily Bulletin, Galveston, Texas newspapers. Files now are in the Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas.

For example Under the Gaslight by Augustin Daly featured the usual plot complications of a heroine, Laura, abused and exploited but eventually triumphant helped by friends. However the “sensation” was the scene where Laura’s friend was tied to a railroad track in the path of an oncoming train by the villain, but saved by the heroine in the nick of time. This type of scene was used again and again in later plays and films. Details from OCAT, 684-685.

Ibid., 135-136 describes Frank Chanfrau (1834-1884) as one of the most popular comic actors during his long career. His most famous role was as Kit in Kit the Arkansas Traveller.

Frank had died in 1878.

The events of the infant’s birth and death are described in MHUM, 49, and the death was reported in the South Jersey Republican, August 28, 1869.


Times, October 4, 1870 has a description of the funeral and burial. He is buried in Greenwood Cemetery next to his brother Edward. Parts of his elaborate monument have been destroyed by vandals.

The will of Ada A. Noyes and papers describing the dispersal of her estate are listed in the Index to Decrees under Liber: 20, Page 365, Bundle 522 in the Chambers of the Surrogate’s Court; County of New York; New York, New York 10007. There are gaps in the records of the dispersal of her estate.

Announcements of preparation for the play and its purpose to raise funds for charity were in South Jersey Republican newspaper, May 27 and June 3, 1871.

Ibid., June 3, 1871.

East Lynne was a melodrama that actress Lucille Western first had Clifton Tayleure adapt for her from a best selling novel by Mrs. Henry Wood in 1863. It not only became her star vehicle for many years, but was such a popular play that it was a runaway favorite for touring and stock companies. Lady Isabel is the heroine, happily married with children, who is seduced and elopes with a cad who lies to her that her husband has been unfaithful. The cad deserts Isabel whose husband has divorced her and has custody of the children. As Isabel is dying, she returns disguised to work as her children’s governess and seek forgiveness from her husband. Obviously Isabel’s role calls for heavy emoting. Ada played Isabel several times, but ironically was performing a bit part in Lucille Western’s company when she died. Information on East Lynne from OCAT, 221.

Ibid., July 1, 1871.

A brief but complete early history of theater in Richmond, drawing on scholarly sources is in “Richmond’s Place High in Theatrical History,” Richmond Times-Dispatch (Bi-Centennial Supplement), September 8, 1937.
Details of the Richmond Theatre building and its stock company managed by Mrs. Powell, including the 1871-1872 seasons are in “The Old Theatre,” *Richmond Dispatch*, March 15, 1896, when the theater building was torn down.

625 From Ada’s obituary in the *Richmond Enquirer*, March 10, 1874. The theater reviewer who seemed to take special interest in Ada and Frank during the 1871-1872 season may have written this obituary.

626 *Richmond Dispatch*, March 15, 1896.

627 Francesca Janauschek (1830-1904) was a Czech actress famed in Europe before her American debut in 1867. She was outstanding as Medea and Lady Macbeth. Most foreign actresses appearing in America performed in their native language, even when appearing with an English-speaking company. Janauschek spoke German but learned English in 1873 so that she would be more effective. From *OCAT*, 378.

628 In *Caste*, an 1867 theatrical success, Ada played Esther, a ladylike actress, though daughter of a drunkard, who marries an officer and aristocrat. Her husband proves by his devotion to her that their difference in class makes no difference in their happy marriage. From *OCAT*, 130.

629 *Richmond Enquirer*, November 2, 1871.


631 Maggie Mitchell (1832-1918) a New Yorker was onstage early and made a big hit at Burton’s and the Bowery theaters. Already a favorite, her most memorable role was the sprite-like country girl in *Fanchon the Cricket*, a dramatization of George Sand’s *La Petite Fadette*. The highlight of the play was Mitchell’s “shadow dance” which Boardman in *OCAT* calls “among the most famous theatrical moments of the era.” She toured in this role for twenty years, though she played other roles as well. Biography of Mitchell in *OCAT*, 481.

632 *Clipper*, January 13, 1872. The play tells of Kit’s search for his wife and daughter that were kidnapped by a gambler. He finds them many years later on a riverboat, though he only is able to rescue his daughter. The highlights of the play include exciting fistfights and the sensational burning of the riverboat. In *OCAT*, 406.

**Notes for Chapter 13**

633 This was recalled by Paul’s son, William Hamilton Hayne, in a letter to Marie Howland, February 16, 1897 in McKeithan, 301-306.

634 Elizabeth Stoddard (1823-1902) wrote several novels. The one receiving feminist critical praise as it is rediscovered today is *The Morgesons*, 1862. Set in Massachusetts, it was very realistic and considered too grim in its day, but was the forerunner of authors like Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary Freeman who used Stoddard’s type of realistic local color. The Stoddards had a literary salon after the 1870s, but there’s no record of Ada being invited to attend.

635 Elizabeth Stoddard to William Winter, March 18_____ (that the date is 1873 is proved by William Hamilton Hayne’s letter and other circumstances). In PHHC, DU.

636 E.S. to W.W., no date (judging from its contents written several days after the other one), PHHC, DU.


638’ The collections I searched for this information are Hayne Collection at Perkins Library, Duke University; South Caroliniana Library at Columbia, South Carolina; and the manuscript collections of the South Carolina Historical Society at Charleston. I also searched in printed collections of Hayne’s letters. Later in this chapter, I write about the shame he, as a kinsman, felt about Ada’s notorious life.

639 Susan had shortened her first name from Susannah. In 1860 she was living in the household of her uncle Hugh Wilson III. She shortly after married Charles Roser of Georgia and they moved with the rest of the Roser family who were cotton brokers to New York after the Civil War. They seemed to have prospered, but by 1873, Susan was widowed, and living in a boardinghouse herself. This information is from genealogical
records compiled by Halcyon Trubey Price. Susan was contacted April 10, 1874, soon after Ada’s death, by Ada’s lawyers John W. and Clarence Mitchell concerning a personal bequest mentioned in Ada’s will. At that time Susan said she was married to Charles Roser and gave a New York address. This information in papers concerning the will and disposition of Ada’s estate, cited fully in Notes, Chapter Nine.

640 Stedman and Gould, I, 247.

641 The accounts of the letter from Elizabeth Stoddard to Mary Booth in February, 1863, and Mary Booth’s reply and subsequent death on February 20, 1863 are from Eleanor Ruggles, *Prince of Players: Edwin Booth* (New York: W.W. Norton, Inc., 1953), 138-139. In her notes on sources, 383-384, Ruggles cites Mrs. Thomas Bailey Aldrich (Lillian Woodman), *Crowding Memories*, (New York Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920) as being her original source for the letters as well as some other material in her book. Lillian Woodman Aldrich was a close friend of Mary Booth and Elizabeth Stoddard.

642 Peter A. Davis in *Theatre History Studies* 8, 1988:3-6, reports that within the first three years of this economic decline over 60 per cent of the nation’s fifty stock companies failed. After ten years, only seven stock companies remained.

643 *Clipper*, April 5, 1873 has an item about J.F. Noyes appearing to replace another actor on March 25 at the Opera House in Albany, New York. This was just a year after his highly successful management of the Richmond Theatre had ended.


646 At Pfaff’s, Mary’s first husband Burnham, knowing his wife, had been unfaithful to him with Fiske, tried to shoot and stab Fiske. By the late 1880s the catty columnist and sometime author of animal dramas separated from her second husband Fiske.

647 I am indebted to Robert Young, Jr., Sacramento, California, William and Lizzie Winter’s great-grandson for sharing with me copies of their collection of Ada’s obituaries as well as other priceless material.

648 MHUM, 49-53.

649 Ibid., 50.

650 West, 10.

651 Ibid., 141.

652 Ibid.

653 MHUM, 53.

654 Warrell, 39.

655 Ibid., 38, 41-42 has thorough description.

656 Ibid., 45, gives this behavior as an example of hysterical pseudorabies: the symptoms mimic the disease but there are no neurological symptoms or fever.

657 MHUM, 52-55.

658 Brown’s reminiscences are in a 1936 letter to Albert Parry published in the Addenda in the revised edition of *Garrets and Pretenders* in 1960.

659 Marie described the visitation, the funeral, Edward’s late appearance, and their discussions about Ada in MHUM, 53-55.

660 Ibid., 55.

P.H.H. to W.W., March 19, 1874, from the Collections of Robert Young, Jr. of Sacramento, California. Young, the great-grandson of William Winter, generously shared this unpublished letter.

“At Last” was published April 11, 1874 in the New York Weekly Graphic. A clipping of the published poem as well as a manuscript version are to be found in an envelope with Ada’s obituary in PHHC, DU.

P.H.H. to Mary Louise Booth, March 13, 1874, PHHC, DU.


Thomas Nashe (1567-1601), Elizabethan playwright and poet wrote: “Beauty is but a flower/Which wrinkles will devour;/Brightness falls from the air,/Queens have died young and fair,/Dust has closed Helen’s eye./I am sick, I must die./Lord have mercy on us!” in verses from his masque Summer’s Last Will and Testament, “In Plague Time.” From E. K. Chambers (ed.) The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 430.

Pease and Pease demonstrate how Sue’s life story is interwoven with generations of other women in her family in their excellent and fascinating family chronicle.

The dispersal of Ada’s estate (complete citation and brief description in Chapter Nine) shows that Aubrey continued his private school education, and as a minor, was assigned a special guardian when Frank Noyes remarried and left New York for a time. After Aubrey turned 21 in 1880 and claimed his inheritance, he married Mabel Moulton, Marie’s niece and Aubrey’s childhood playmate. As an actor he started out in small roles and later had some success as a “low” or eccentric comedian in variety shows. His and Mabel’s son Frank E. Noyes was born in August, 1881 (note citing his birth certificate is in Chapter Three.) In Marie Howland’s memoirs and correspondence, she notes that Aubrey and Mabel divorced, Aubrey blaming their unhappiness on Mabel’s independent spirit that had been nurtured by Marie and Ada. Mabel became an expert seamstress supporting Frank with little help from Aubrey whose whereabouts are unknown after 1895. After Mabel died about 1900, Frank lived with his maternal grandparents, the Woodbridges in Alton, New Hampshire where he was last heard of in the 1900 New Hampshire census working with his grandfather in the local shoe factory. As for Ada’s husband Frank, J. Franklin Noyes, he took his own life on July 13, 1878.

The Saturday Press, August 1859-December 1860; New York Leader (with a few breaks) 1862-1863, 1865; The Golden Era, March-August, 1864; and the San Francisco Bulletin, August-November, 1864 are available on microfilm during periods named she wrote for them. As far as I know, the following are not on microfilm. I found The New York Atlas (broken series—her poetry is early in 1855, her series of six autobiographical articles from late 1856, and an article and short story from Paris from Spring, 1856) at the New York Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester Massachusetts, which also has the complete files of Vanity Fair, though I’ve only found one article by Ada from 1859. The complete files of Charleston College Magazine 1854-1855 are in the Archives of the College of Charleston; Charleston, South Carolina. A complete bibliography of her writings is in preparation.

I had many conversations about Ada Clare and the Pfaffians with Professor Albert Parry between 1985-1989 in which he generously shared much information and advice.
Ada Clare, 1864. Photograph Collection of The Bancroft Library; University of California at Berkeley; Berkeley, California, donated by Charles Warren Stoddard.
Aubrey Clare, 1864. Photograph Collection of The Bancroft Library; University of California at Berkeley; Berkeley, California, donated by Charles Warren Stoddard.
Ada Clare in the role of Mistress Page in the April, 1866 production of *Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Harvard Theatre Collection, Harvard University.